



*KNOWLEDGE OF INDIA SERIES*

*GENERAL EDITOR:*

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I  
GANDHI



# GANDHI

A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

By ELA SEN



SUSIL GUPTA

1945 CALCUTTA 1945

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*To ALEC*  
*for his sympathetic understanding*  
*of India's aspirations.*

## *FOREWORD*

*GANDHI marks an epoch in India which began with the re-orientation of the Indian National Congress in 1920 from a discussion group to an organisation committed to a militant programme. His personality has dominated the Indian scene for over twenty-five years, during which time his activities have been varied and even in his fight for India's freedom, he has put forward constructive ideas. He has combined the qualities of a statesman with the mind of a saint, and has electrified the world with his ideas and ideals. Probably more has been written about him than of any other world figure of his time—much has been critical, some slanderous, others have deified him; but this book aims at giving a studied picture of the man through his deeds. It is not presumptuous enough to try to interpret him, and there is a genuine desire to be objective—as far as it is possible for a nationalist Indian to be when speaking of the undisputed leader of the Indian peoples.*

*During his lifetime Gandhi has shown a consistency of purpose, which has been modulated and graduated by events and policies but the motif has not changed. If he is not remembered for anything else in after years his contribution to pacifism—converting it from theory to practical militancy—and his crusade on behalf of the Untouchables must for ever reserve him a niche in the memory of his countrymen. He has spent his days in the service of the poor and the depressed and therefore in India more than anywhere else he has fulfilled a patriotic duty. His revolutionary activities have been singularly gradual and at all times he has sought to avoid extremes without flinching from his purpose. Whether this moderation has served India well or ill it is not the purpose of this book to delineate but rather to present the facts for the judgment of the reader. It is interesting to realise how the fact that India's salvation lies in severance from the British*

*connection has been unfolded in Gandhi's life step by step, and how far he has travelled from his youthful belief in the good influence of the British Empire. To-day in his seventy-sixth year he stands by his slogan "Quit India"—after years of disillusionment and efforts to make imperialist Britain realise the rights of the Indian people.*

*Religion, Truth and Non-violence have been the pivots of his life, and these qualities have created a man entirely free from bigotry and as approachable as a child. He believes in strict self-discipline approaching asceticism which the great men of India have in all ages exhibited, and which to us in the modern age seems unnecessary and rigidly unnatural. But Gandhi's greatness of spirit is the ultimate sublimation of self; all his life he has striven for this and found it at last in absolute self-discipline. In him this has not created complexes, which are possible in a lesser man.*

*No conclusion is easy to formulate regarding the man who in spite of age continues to be dynamic. It is however necessary to say that if in these pages there are some criticisms implied or outspoken, they are not meant to be impertinent but are offered in all humility as an individual opinion and Gandhiji would be the last person to deny that to anyone.*

CALCUTTA

September 1944

ELA SEN

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# GANDHI

## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND AND CHILDHOOD

(KATHIAWAD is a small north-westerly portion of the province of Gujerat,) not far from the blue waters of the Arabian Sea. To the north of it is the peninsula of Cutch, and there has been a tradition of peasant rivalry between the Cutchies and the Kathiawadis. The people of Kathiawad are of peasant origin, many of whom have attained the status of small tradesmen. There are landlords and zemindars, but as a whole the bulk of the population might be termed middle-class. Unlike their neighbours of mill-owning Ahmedabad both the Kathiawadis and the Cutchies are famed for intricate hand-embroidery and other handicrafts. They possess an innate love of beauty and colour.  
x<sup>1</sup> (This small compact sub-province of Kathiawad—full of orthodoxy and convention—was the cradle of Gandhi, but to-day his personality has burst the bonds of mere provincialism and he is synonymous with India.) Whether he still has a sentimental attachment for his birthplace, it is not known, since the whole of India claim him as their own. (But) almost eight decades ago on October 2nd, 1866 there was born to an ordinary *baania* family at Porbunder Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, with nothing to distinguish him from any other infant of that period except perhaps a pair of very large ears, which at that time was more a mark of ugliness if anything. He was the youngest of a family of three brothers, one sister, and two half-sisters. Even though the family was not very large, compared to the standards of those times, the

youngest always had a special nook in the mother's affections, and clung more to her. To this Gandhi was no exception.

Though his family were *bania* by caste and must have at some stage been grocers or the like, for three generations before him his ancestors had been prime ministers of several States in Kathiawad. His grandfather was a man well known for his stern principles and loyalties. Karamchand Gandhi, better known to all as Kaba Gandhi, the Mahatma's father, was a person of fiery temper and had inherited his father's instincts for loyalty and truth. He was devoted to his community, and was a member of the Rajasthani Court, which in those days was instrumental in arbitrating disputes between a chief and other members of the community. (Unlike Gandhiji's ideas of continency, and *brahmacharya* his father was a full-blooded, normal person having married four times—the last one, who was Gandhiji's mother—at the age of 40.) Without knowing much about religion, he practised it by going to temples and listening to discourses by learned *pandits*. Kaba Gandhi had no great education, all that could be said of him was that he was literate, intelligent and a man of vast experience. It was these qualities that made it possible for him to keep discipline over hundreds of men in the various posts of Dewan which he held. There was another and significant qualification which he possessed—this was his unshakable integrity and sincerity of purpose.

The religious background of the family was Vaishnavaite or the worship of Krishna with a general trend towards the preservation of all life. (These were the seeds of non-violence sown with his blood within Gandhi, which were later to sprout and acclaim him as the exponent of one of the highest theories of man's conduct) In fact it was to cause people to compare him with Christ and Buddha. But in his childhood it helped to mould his character by environment and the practical religious training which

children receive from their elders. His people were practising *Vaishnavs* and there was not one day that his mother missed going to the Haveli or Vaishnavite temple. If his father had good social and practical religion in his character, Putilbai, his mother, was endowed with a delicate mysticism which was embellished with the thousand and one fineries which faith calls forth. She was an essentially devout person, in whom the qualities of Martha and Mary vied with each other, and quite often Mary triumphed for there was not a fast or a festival that she would miss. But religion was for her not just a garb for highdays and holidays, it was very much a part of her everyday life. She looked after her home and her children, but before all else she paid homage to her God. It is interesting to note another trait in Gandhi's character which had its roots far back in the influences and environment of his childhood—his capacity for fasts and their motive power. Putilbai, who was the greatest influence in her son's life (in spite of the love and reverence he gave to his father her position was unique) never missed any of the fasts to which the devout Hindu wife is enjoined for the welfare of her husband, her family and her home, and therefore it is no wonder that her simple practices have found its echo in the heart and deeds of her son. There is many a Hindu mother who is as devout as Putilbai, but is not fortunate in possessing a son like Gandhiji. To him his mother was a saint, and every step of her life seemed to shower blessings upon their household. (She remained amongst them as a pure light guiding them all step by step—her purity of spirit lit with an inward glow the lamp of her body. Gandhi tells a tender tale of one of her fasts when she vowed that during the four months of the monsoon she would never eat without seeing the sun. One who has lived in India knows how the monsoon sweeps over the country, and it rains ceaselessly for days without a glimpse of the sun. Unable to bear the thought

of their mother fasting, the children would watch out for the sun, and run to report it to her as soon as it appeared. Once it so happened that before she could come out and see it, the sun had again gone behind a heavy bank of clouds thereby depriving her of her meal. Her remark was characteristic of her: "God did not want me to eat to-day," and she returned to take up her daily duties as if nothing had happened.) But one fancies that the disappointment and chagrin of her children would be far greater.

(Gandhi's childhood was a solemn one, and lacking strangely in the frivolities with which we surround our children to-day. Children of those days had a curiously grown-up status, may be because of the early marriages to which they had to submit) but they soon learned to take up and acquit themselves of responsibilities, and Gandhi was no exception to this. Though the youngest in the family he acquired a grown-up wisdom by consort-ing with his elders, particularly his mother, imbibing her wisdom and sound commonsense, listening to her arguments with the ladies of the court specially the widowed mother of the Thakore Saheb of Porbunder. From the earliest days his love of truth at any cost dominated his mind, and he was free from the tiring little innocent lies that fill the life of any child. They are like the breaking of moth's wings, leaving neither scar nor regret, not even are they indelible; a child outgrows them as easily as he outgrows his clothes. But even of such untruths he was free. In life Gandhi has often sought to compromise but he has never faltered from his childhood's ideals.

(When he was seven years old, his father left the services of the Thakore Saheb of Porbunder to join the Rajasthanik Court at Rajkot, and here the child Gandhi was put through his middle and high school training. He classes himself as a mediocre student, many a child will take heart from his assertion that he had difficulty with

his multiplication tables. He was not a companionable child, and made few friends at school, but he found great companionship in his books. Even though he was not a brilliant student, he was devoted to his studies and took great pains with them.) Though he could not understand untruthfulness or prevarication, he had even then a fund of tolerance whereby to excuse these weaknesses and not allow his respect or love for those in fault to change. Strange influences come to bear upon one in one's childhood, and in Gandhi this came in the shape of a series of stories and plays dealing with the devotion to one's parents. Already he was a child who was a keen admirer of his father, a devotee of his mother and these tales of ancient India merely added fuel to his ardour. He devoured them greedily, even at the expense of his lessons which he was expected to prepare out of school hours. (The figures of *Shravana* and *Harishchandra* rose up before him as shining examples of filial duty and sacrifice, and in the life of that solemn, grown-up child attained a significance before which everything else paled. His ambition lay in imitating their deeds, and in aspiring to such heights of filial devotion as inspired by them) (He longed to emulate *Shravana*'s example of dying for his parents) and would often play the lament of the hero's parents on the concertina his father had purchased for him. (And *Harishchandra*'s truthfulness became a beacon in the child's life) he would often weep in recalling the ideal that had inspired the king in his trials. Thus by means of such literature yet another step was added to the foundations in his character, which even in childhood was ever striving upwards. Perhaps his own innocence was his greatest safeguard, and thus the struggle for truth that came later in his life having such foundations was able to win its way through. But in those days values had not begun to get involved, and the utter simplicity of things made life for him an inspiring matter. Within the small

framework of his life fenced around by his parents, his learning and his relatives, his soul was struggling to reach up to the fundamentals of life. Little did anybody dream of the vast contribution he was to make to a nation's life, little did he himself suspect the part that was to be his, he was content to live and work out life according to certain ideals and this absorbed him. He was a supreme idealist, and has remained so in spite of disillusionments which life has forced upon him but which he has been able to discard as *maya* and striven towards his goal.

(There was a religious atmosphere in the Gandhi home, and amongst the community, but somehow the glitter and tinkle of the prosperous looking temple and its keepers made little impression on Gandhiji in his childhood.) This has survived even to this day—his dislike of show and pomp. This began to be enhanced when he first heard of rumours of immorality in the life behind the temple walls. He felt that its purity was not true, but as *Harishchandra* and *Shravana*'s example had moved him and made indelible impressions upon his youthfully plastic mind, similarly while he rejected temples, religion was woven into his life by the ministrations of his old nurse who used to recite the *Rama-nama*—or the holy names given to *Rama*. These are generally used among superstitious people for the chasing away of ghosts and evil spirits as *Rama* is looked upon as an incarnation of God. Of course he outgrew its value but never lost its sentiments, nor the lengthy poem called *Rama-raksha* about Rama's deeds in vanquishing the monster king of Ceylon who had abducted his wife, and which he was so proud to be able to recite in Sanskrit with the correct accent and pronunciation. The *Ramayana* attained a real and greater significance when during his father's illness he heard it recited daily by a great devotee of *Rama*, and his devotion introduced a special fervour and bearing into the recital. Thus Gandhiji grew up, as so many children of India do, imbib-

ing their religion by word of mouth, by the example of their parents and by hearing the word of God as a daily household word. (His family were plain, middle-class, God-fearing people, and his early glimpses of religion remained with him all his life.)\*

(Even while he was at High School a strange turmoil entered his life.) It was the lot of all growing boys of those days—this was marriage. It was inevitable, and nothing would stop it. It was convention, they had grown up with it and did not deny it, in fact it brought a strange excitement and glamour into their slowly unfolding adolescence and Gandhi was no exception to this rule. It was doubtful whether he had any idea of the responsibilities he would have to shoulder, all he knew was that henceforth he would be treated as an adult and be looked up to by at least one person—that was his wife.

(Gandhi and his second brother were married together, that is both weddings took place on the same day.) As Hindus spend much time and money over such events, it was a measure of economy as well as the desire to have a function whose splendour would be unrivalled in their particular community which could be surpassed in a joint one without spending the entire amount for two individual weddings. (At that time the family was at Rajkot and had to be taken to Porbunder where the brides were awaiting them. The excitement and glamour of the occasion was like sweet wine to these children, and they felt like heroes without understanding at all the implications of the ceremony. They were aware of its finality and that conjugal fidelity was its corner stone. Apart from this what did these girl brides of thirteen and their husbands understand? They were bereft of their childhood and flung together to grow up overnight into men and women. (Gandhi himself was only thirteen years old and his wife Kasturba was the same age.) Young brides and bridegrooms usually have plenty of advice thrust upon them and also attain

a precociousness by watching their elders, but the wedding night usually finds them as little more than frightened little children facing each other shyly. And so it was with Gandhiji and Kasturba in spite of all the whispered advice from their relatives. They felt strange and alone, and found this rather disquieting.

As a good actor very soon adopts his part, so did Gandhi get over his shy awkwardness and armed with knowledge from pice pamphlets he assumed his rôle of husband in all seriousness. The real benefit of child marriages—that is growing up with the idea that a certain individual is your husband or your wife—was apparent in his case for his love for his young bride became his life. In school and out of it his thoughts were ever with her, and he found separation intolerable even though it were only temporary or momentary. His intense absorption in her created one annoying quality, it transformed him into a jealous husband which caused much unnecessary bitterness in his early married life. He was prepared, nay overwilling, to love and cherish his wife but she must admit and realise his authority as the husband. His new found status went to his head like rich, sweet nectar. These married children were not by custom allowed to live together for long periods, in fact the first five years of married life were punctuated by long separations during which time the girl went to visit her parents. (Both Gandhiji and Kasturba found this irksome, more so the former, for the latter however there was the excitement of going home to her own people. But this tradition was fostered mainly with the idea that at such a tender age the girl should not be subjected to frequent child bearing. Quite often this safeguard did not work, but again mostly it did. So as they had become the unknowing and willing victims of child marriage, they also had to submit to these separations.)

Custom and convention dogged peoples' footsteps

much more in the days of Gandhi's adolescent youth than they do to-day. That is, some of the shackles have been shaken off, others have been merely worn away but still much remains that one were better without. But irksome and quite often meaningless as these were they certainly served as a form of discipline upon the young people, and from that point of view bred a restraint and reserve that was all to the basic good of character building. (As ever it happens youth chafes at such bonds, it did then as it does now, but both Gandhiji and Kasturba had to submit to it. One of the many things was that they should never be seen holding converse in the presence of elders, and of course there was *purdah*, so that the young people could not meet except at night in the privacy of their bedrooms.) They were very young people in love, under the magic of a relationship that was novel and delightful, therefore although Gandhiji would have liked to utilise some time in directing Kasturba's studies his opportunities were very few. She herself was not very keen and thus did not create such opportunities of studying on her own, to the effect that her education was fundamentally neglected, otherwise with the help of her sharp intelligence and keen commonsense she might have become a learned person; as it was even up to the time of her death she could read simple Gujerati and could barely write. (Her husband's ambitions for her learning were never fulfilled, for which more than once he blames himself but in every other respect from her spirited girlhood when she resented his interference with her liberties up till the day she died Kasturba more than ever fulfilled her part completely as the wife of her great husband.)

But in adolescence Gandhi's acute jealousy created great sorrow for them both. He was determined, as only youth can be determined, that he would be the ideal, faithful husband and he also had the *idée fixe* that Kasturba should be a good and faithful wife. He had

no cause or occasion to doubt her fidelity, but his intense love and desire for her made him like Don Quixote to tilt with a windmill. Of course as such he must command her complete obedience, and he was taking his rôle of husband so seriously that he wanted to be sure that she was aware of the gravity. In countless little insignificant ways he began to assert his authority—that she should not go there, that she should stay here, until Kasturba was unable to tolerate such dictation. Her spirit rebelled against it, and consequently they were often both very unhappy. But again love would always bridge things over and create great happiness. Thus these two children played at being grown-ups, and in their quarrels and reunions shed many a childish tear that in later years was to seem so senseless and unnecessary. But for the time being it was important, serious and significant, and having been deprived of the gift of childhood they wallowed in their experiences, helpless in their immaturity. Life was an eternal honeymoon for these two children pledged together.

(Marriage however created no interruptions in Gandhi's schooling and he continued as before. Only now even at school he would think of Kasturba, his new bride. The idea of possession never failed to thrill him in his thoughts of her. (He was a conscientious student of mediocre ability but with one quality of brilliance that once he had understood and grasped the actual meaning the subject held no further terrors for him.) Having missed one year due to his marriage, he had only six months in one class when he was promoted to a higher and found himself faced with English as the medium of instruction. To this struggle he had to submit himself, as students are still doing, as the ultimate submission to an alien rule. Even while Gandhi was conscientious in his studies he was much more concerned in the development of his character—that is that it was a far greater disgrace for him to be rebuked than to be punished. Young as he was, he was most

sensitive to any implications of blemish on his character, and it invariably mortified him completely to be suspected of untruth.) He was a real votary of truth and any insinuation that he was not being truthful would bring tears to his eyes. He tried to mould his conduct on certain ideals, and any rebukes or punishments from his teachers he felt as an indication that he had failed in his endeavour and this caused him far greater hurt than all the resultant punishments.

(Being shy by nature Gandhi disliked games and did not take in a kindly way to physical culture.) He did not think that it was a necessary adjunct of education, though he had developed even then a habit of long walks which later in life went to cause no amount of consternation among his admirers when asked to accompany him.) Clare Sheridan gives an amusing account of her impressions of these walks when Gandhiji went to England for the Round Table Conference. They kept him constitutionally fit and courted no company, so he was more than pleased to indulge them. But another reason why he could not take physical instruction in school was that it meant staying in after school hours, and as his father was ill he was anxious to utilise every moment in nursing him. This created much trouble for him in school but finally he was able to obtain exemption. (He was a devoted son, and had always wanted to serve his parents, and the only thing that came in between his complete devotion to them was his love and longing for his wife which haunted him at all hours.) This he has deplored, but to normal people it seems only a natural and inevitable thing in youth. There is nothing shameful about it, but Gandhiji has abhorred it as the manifestation of carnal desires. Nevertheless he neither could nor did he desire to subjugate it then, and thus did not attempt to artificially stem what was a natural sentiment.

(Being reserved by temperament Gandhi made few

friends at school, and his two noted friendships are touched with tragedy.) The first one he made left him because he took up with the second one, whom he knew not to be of good character but whom he felt he could improve by his friendship. His entire family were against it but he would not give it up.) His mother's advice could not be gainsaid, though he ignored his wife's by right of his husbandhood, but with his mother he pleaded that no person was irredeemable, and that nobody could drag him down unless of his own volition. He was then innocent of the guiles and wiles of human nature, and he admired the strength and capability of his friend tremendously. It was he who initiated Gandhi into meat-eating, saying that therein lay the strength of the Englishman to rule over India, and if only we were as strong we could make India free. The experiment had to be done in secret, for in spite of reforms etc., the bulk of the people were strict vegetarians and the Gandhis in particular. But this secrecy and deception was too much for Gandhi, and he hated lying to his mother. By no compromise could he shake himself free of the feeling of guilt which obsessed him, yet he knew that reforms were good and freedom was good but would they be obtained by lying to one's parents? Therefore he came to the conclusion that until he could eat meat openly he would not do so surreptitiously and told his friend and mentor so.

Yet another reason of his attachment was the fact that Gandhi himself was timid and afraid of such silly things as the snakes, ghosts, etc. He suffered these horrors alone, for whom could he tell? He could certainly not lower the flag before his child wife who was herself fearless and not afraid of anything. But this friend knew of it and would make open boast of his own fearlessness and strength, and Gandhi would worship him for his prowess as is inevitable with the weak in their attitude

to the strong. It is a kind of vicarious living. But a strange characteristic in him who was to become the champion of the weak and the depressed.

(Gandhi's zeal for reforming his friend almost led to greater unhappiness in his life, for this person continued to fan his jealousy even insinuating that his wife was not faithful. This led him to inflict untold sorrow upon her, and almost led to a breach between them. Only because she was a Hindu wife, for whom there is no redress that she could keep on and finally make him realise his folly. It was this final deed that at last opened his eyes to the fact that instead of being able to reform his friend, it was having a disastrous effect on him that made him give up the company he had kept.)

## C H A P T E R II

### EARLY MANHOOD

At the age of sixteen Gandhi lost his father.) This bare phrase cannot adequately convey what this bereavement meant to a person who had taken as his ideal the devotion to one's parents. For sometime before his death Gandhi had diligently helped his mother to nurse his father and spent his spare time compounding drugs, etc., massaging the old man's legs and seeing to his comforts. He loved doing this, and would continue till late at night until the invalid fell asleep. What he did for his parents was never from a mere sense of duty, there was a great deal of love behind the action. (But he had another claimant to his attentions, especially as his love for her had in no way diminished during the three years of married life. And if he was devoted to his father and to his care, he always looked forward eagerly to night when

he could be with Kasturba. That she was with child added all the more to his consideration for her. Therefore he divided his time between school and nursing his father, stealing only the nights for his wife when his services were no longer required. Even for those interludes he had never ceased to blame his self-indulgence, because his father died while he was away from his bedside sleeping beside his wife. (He was mortified to the extreme and has never been reconciled to the fact that had he not deserted his post he could have been present during his father's last living moments.

(For many days Kaba Gandhi had ailed and undergone a variety of treatment in indigenous remedies under the attention of *hakims*, *ayurvedic* physicians and even quacks but he could obtain no freedom from his complaint.) An English surgeon had recommended an operation, and in spite of all the preparations having been made ready the family physician completely vetoed the idea and the project was abandoned. The patient came to his old remedies and grew weaker and frailer. But he was obstinate and rigid in his principles and till the last would insist on going to the lavatory rather than be assisted in bed. When at last he finally passed away, only his brother was near him. They were devoted to each other and the younger one would spend days and nights, on his return from Rajkot, with the invalid. At last it was in his arms that he died, fully conscious and completely aware of his approaching end. Shortly after this bereavement a child was born to Gandhi, who did not survive more than three or four days. Thus in a very short period, young as he was he had experienced two of the greatest sorrows to which man is condemned—the loss of a parent, and the loss of an offspring.

(When the nobly spreading tree is cut down from the top, its lower branches and trunk shiver bereft of the protecting shade above them, so it was with the Gandhi family

on the death of the father. In spite of his illness his personality had served to keep them all powerfully together. Now they felt shorn and loosely knit. But Pufflibai, the mother, was a strong and forceful character, God-fearing and zealous, therefore she rallied herself and her children so that her grief should not allow them to drift away. During the next two years Mohandas Gandhi, the youngest, matriculated and went into college at Bhavnagar, which was a cheaper proposition for the family. But he did not somehow take to the life or the studies, in fact one wonders how he would have fared if a great change had not taken place in his life at that stage when he came home for his holidays after the first term. He was most unsatisfied with himself and his surroundings, but could not dream of so drastic a change that ultimately revolutionised the entire *motif* of his life.

The suggestion came out of the most undreamt of sources—from the family adviser, (Mavje Dave), a shrewd, old brahmin who had enjoyed the confidence of Gandhiji's father and uncles. He was looked up to by the entire clan, in particular by Gandhiji's branch of it. (He brought forward the revolutionary suggestion that the young boy be sent to England to qualify for the Bar. His argument was that even if he did graduate his ultimate destiny would be a clerkship for Rs. 60 per mensem at the most.) The old brahmin would like Mohandas to fill his father's post as dewan and what better qualifications could there be for it than to become a barrister? Gandhi was delighted at the suggestion as he found his present studies most irksome and would be glad of an escape. But the others including his elder brother were dumbfounded—old Mavje Dave had brought down a hornet's nest about his ears. His mother was most distressed as she hated the idea of parting from him; his uncle frankly said that he did not approve and therefore would not help but if his mother permitted him to go, he would give him his bless-

ings; funds were a problem and Gandhi thought frantically of help from his elder brother and of selling his wife's ornaments. Finally with the advice of family well-wishers it was decided that he should undertake the trip, but his mother insisted that he must before going take an oath never to touch wine, women or meat. To please his mother he gladly took the vow. But there were further trials that the family had to face, for one section of the *bania* community decided to outcaste Gandhi if he persisted in going abroad, and what is more whosoever went to see him off at the boat would be penalised. Familiar with the almost feudal and tribal customs neither the family nor the culprit argued about it, but Gandhi, (with the help of his relations persisted and sailed for England on September 4th, 1887, leaving behind his beloved mother, brothers, his wife and an infant of a few months old.)

Young, inexperienced and homesick Gandhi was like the thousands of students who have since his times crossed and re-crossed the waters. There was hope, ambition and enthusiasm in his heart of what he would achieve, and an eagerness to imbibe all that he could of the land he was about to visit. From the beginning he was prepared to cast himself in the mould of the English gentleman, but always he was jealous of his principles and his vows. Throughout his entire stay he remained a vegetarian, and as he was also a teetotaller he used to be in great demand at the Bar dinners where his bottle was consumed by three other fellow students. So much for popularity! Never having travelled beyond the precincts of Gujerat he found the voyage with its intricacies of manners and modes most irksome. He knew very little English and this coupled with his inordinate shyness made him less sociable than ever. He was a good sailor and suffered no evil effects of seasickness, but being lonely he found the voyage after the first excitement had worn away rather boring. Being

a vegetarian and unaccustomed to Western diet he ate very little except the sweets he had brought from home, and fruit from the boat, and always in the seclusion of his cabin. His stern resolve to remain a vegetarian attracted the notice of one or two Englishmen who warned him that the cold climate of England would make it impossible for him to remain so. Gandhi, undaunted, refused to believe this.

(His arrival in England was one of bewilderment, loneliness and confusion that the novice usually experiences.) Amongst strangers, unacquainted with their ways and manners and entirely at the mercy of his experiences he was desperately homesick. (He longed for the protecting tenderness of his mother, and shed many a tear in the loneliness of his lodgings. Several introductions had been given to him—to Dadabhai Naoroji, Dr. P. J. Mehta, Sj. Dalpatram Shukla and Prince Ranjit Sinhji. Of these four great men of their time he first made the acquaintance of Dr. Mehta, but nothing could quite overcome the dreariness of those first few days in London. At that time three years seemed such a terribly long time to pass in unfamiliar surroundings amongst alien people. Their manners and customs quite baffled him and he always had to be on the *qui vive* so as not to transgress and this was a terrible strain. Homesickness would sweep over him, and there was none to share his misery, none to comfort him with friendly advice. Even then he told himself drearily that the three years had got to be lived through somehow, in spite of all inconveniences and loneliness.

(Gandhi's vow to never touch meat created many a *contretemps* for him, generally with the disastrous result of his having to go hungry. He disliked intensely the spare helpings of boiled vegetables that were given in English households and the anxiety of his landladies on his behalf was no less.) One of Dr. Mehta's friends, with

whom he stayed for a while to get himself accustomed to the English way of living, was genuinely perturbed at his insistence to remain a vegetarian and lectured and railed at him by turns until he found out how useless this was and gave up trying to convert him. But he continued to worry over him from the health point of view. Soon however Gandhi began to get over his awkwardness and began to look around London which resulted in his discovering a vegetarian restaurant and some books in defence of vegetarianism which he read avidly becoming thereby more and more conscious of his superior convictions. What is more he developed the missionary zeal for converting to vegetarianism. Yet another habit he acquired, almost immediately with his arrival in England, was that of reading newspapers—something that was then not widely prevalent in India. He had never read a paper till he came to England, and the majority of Indian people were then like him. The day of newspapers and journalism was to come later with the rapid development of political consciousness.

There is a phase of self-consciousness through which every student from India passes in England. He feels that he is not in harmony. Of course he is not, he is himself an Indian, but this he finds rather a handicap, so he sets out to model himself on the lines of an English gentleman which admittedly makes him come in line with his surroundings, but which does not fit him for the struggles he will have to face back home. At such moments he forgets that he is in England to study, it is not his home. So it was with Gandhi. His staunch adherence to vegetarianism made him something of an oddity, many people feared that he was becoming a mere crank, therefore he felt that he must make himself more like other people in other ways. So he started on a programme of learning etiquette and developing social qualities. He abandoned his Bombay-made clothes and bought himself

ones cut on English lines; he gave up the ready-made tie and learned to tie a bow and a knot; he indulged in a gold watch chain sent out from home, and he began to develop foppish tendencies and spruceness of attire which were to last him for some time. He also took lessons in elocution, learnt to play the violin and had lessons in ballroom dancing. In short he was determined that no longer would he disgrace himself, he would strive to attain social qualities and model himself upon the English gentleman. (After a while, however, he realised the superficiality of it all and it dawned upon him that he had come to study law and none of these things were actually helping him. Then and there he determined to give up his music lessons, dancing and elocution and pledge himself to study.)

(This marks the ending of the first phase of his life in England, and the opening of a period of intense study. He decided to go up for the London Matric even though it involved studying Latin and French, the latter he had already begun to learn but the former was an uphill task to be undertaken within five months.) But he passed the London Matric in his second attempt, that means within a year. During this time the idea of simple living, which he was later to reduce to a bare minimum, began to manifest itself and his first step was to remove himself from the Anglo-Indian family who had so far accommodated him, to a two roomed flat. This was inspired firstly from the fact that on his own he would be able to devote himself to study completely, and secondly it saved money as it would not be necessary for him to enter into social contacts with the members of the family. The example of poor students living in slums made him feel that even his two rooms were a luxury, and he changed to one room, where he did some of his own cooking and walked to and from his tutor's. He also indulged in many experiments in dietetics at this time motivated by his vegetarianism to

—seek variety and palatable food, also from a spirit of economy. In this way he found himself in the company of noted vegetarians of England, and was even elected to the executive committee of the Vegetarian Society.

(Throughout his stay in England Gandhi remained reticent and shy, and quite unable to cope with public speaking.) It seems strange in a person whose every saying was later to be recorded and given significance to as a public utterance. He enjoyed a mental privacy with a feeling of impotency to further his causes. It was a diffidence which he did not overcome till much later. An incident is recorded of this period that one of the very first causes that he sponsored and lost was on behalf of Dr. Allinson, an exponent of birth control. Knowing in later years how bitterly he opposed and attacked birth control, it is interesting to know that he violently opposed Dr. Allinson's expulsion from the Vegetarian Society on account of his views. He felt the gross injustice of it, and the fact that he himself felt birth control to be a harmful measure in no wise clouded his sense of justice. But there were not many who shared his catholicity of views, and thus he could not prevent Dr. Allinson's expulsion. Even at this stage when he felt the situation so acutely, he could not summon up sufficient courage to speak at the meeting and his arguments had to be read out. Out of this innate shyness and diffidence there has emerged one factor that has helped to stimulate his brain and activise his intellect —this is his powers of observing silence. To-day Gandhiji's day of silence is known throughout India, nay the world, but it developed out of his reserve into economy in words until he found much inspiration in complete silence. It has helped him to exercise a control over his tongue and prevented the utterance of thoughtless and useless words—a truly golden quality. (He has been accused of quibbling by many people, of reversing his judgments and opinions overnight; such things may have

happened, as indeed they have, but there is a great deal of honesty of purpose and aim that has enabled him to admit where he thinks he is at fault rather than an aptitude for quibbling.

Indian students have always suffered from an inferiority complex when in Europe and this takes many forms—unreasonable and virulent anglophile, untruths regarding their real status or manner of living at home or exaggeration of their positions. But a very common one is the suppression of their marriage by those who are married. Especially was this phase prevalent in the last generation, that is during Gandhi's youth, when most young men were victims of child-marriages. It led to untold complications, and not many had his courage whereby to extricate themselves from compromising positions. Quite often it gave Indian students a bad name, and all because they were ashamed of a custom they had not the strength to eradicate. For a while Gandhi let well alone, and followed this path by compromising with untruth in never denying that he was married but by allowing it to be supposed that he was a bachelor. However it could not go on long for he was uncomfortable not to be able to admit the truth, and was truly caught in a dilemma when an elderly lady took a fancy to him and invited him to her flat to meet young men and women. As he had very little conversation few young women were much interested in him, but at this flat one person in particular took a fancy to him and the hostess would often leave them together. Gandhi was worried and determined that he must disillusion his friends—the old lady and the young girl. He was too shy to admit it verbally, so he wrote at length explaining that he was married etc., etc. Both women appreciated his frankness. And the friendship was never disturbed.

“Eating his dinners” to become a barrister used to amuse Gandhiji, for there was little learned discourse

during the meals which were made rather an occasion to be sociable and festive. He himself ate little, being a vegetarian and drank not at all, therefore the proceedings rather bored him.) As it was essential that he attend he went through them, and shared his bottle of wine amongst those at his table. (He was called to the Bar in 1891, and his present objective having been attained he was ready to return home.) Before he completed his studies he visited Paris during the Paris Exposition of 1890, and saw among the novelties the Tour Eiffel—his opinion of it is that "the Tower was a good demonstration of the fact that we are all children attracted by trinkets." Tolstoy had called it a castle in the air conjured by man out of his moments of intoxication.

(Gandhi arrived in India on a stormy day in July 1891, wondering what he was going to do, how set about to earn his living and where.) He was confronted with the many problems of adjustment as all young men returning home have to face. His anxiety was no less, but he was not worried. He took things as they came, in his stride. His elder brother met him at the docks, but he learnt that the mother who had been his inspiration was no more. It was a terrific blow to face on his arrival, but always reserved his bleeding soul showed no physical signs of weakness. His loss was grievous but an outward show of mourning would not lessen it; so he forbore, but nothing could fill the void she had left in his life. He was so proud of having kept to his vow that it did offer some consolation that he had not failed her. At least she knew that, but the news of her death turned to ice all the aspirations her love had fostered in him.

The family, in particular his elder brother, were ambitious that he should make a name for himself. Gandhi had of course on his return to face the excommunication from caste which had started before his departure for England. He himself wanted to keep aloof from the

section that wished to outcaste him and not interfere in their line of action. But his eldest brother thought fit to propitiate the favourable elements by a caste dinner. Gandhi thought this quite unnecessary but submitted nevertheless. His wife's family were of that section which had outcasted him and thus could not openly entertain him at their houses but were willing to do so surreptitiously which he declined. Probably because he himself was free from caste prejudices he never cherished any bitterness against those who excommunicated him nor did he try to create a feeling for his rights in this matter. Even then such narrowness passed him by.

(His arrival brought a wave of westernisation into his immediate family—he introduced European foods, clothes and mode of living. Always fond of children he took his own child and his nephews in hand and gave them physical instruction, taught them to play games, etc., and spent much time with them. He was also determined to carry on the education of his wife—Western women acting as his inspiration. His love for her had in no way changed and his jealousy was as acute as before, not long after his return he drove her to seek the refuge of her father's home, from where he brought her back only after she had been thoroughly miserable. Then he continued to persecute her with his love. In the meantime initiation into European ways and attire entailed greater expenses, and he began his practice at Bombay and "found the barrister's profession a bad job—much show and little knowledge." He worked hard and economised howsoever he could, but it was not long before he found that a briefless barrister has no way of making two ends meet and gave up his idea of getting a practice in Bombay and went to Rajkot.) Here his brother's influence obtained him clients and (by merely drafting applications he was able to make over Rs. 300 a month which was a comfortable living.

'The atmosphere of Rajkot was no different from that of any other state—it was full of cliques and intrigues while the Political Agent ruled over it without the slightest trace of democracy. Early in his career Gandhi was brought face to face with this imperialist autocracy. It was at the request of his brother that he saw the Political Agent, whom he had met in England, to disabuse his mind regarding his opinion of Gandhi's brother. Without knowing what the attitude of a *sahib* would be he was loth to take advantage of a mere acquaintanceship but it was to please his brother that he did so to find out that in incivility it is difficult to beat a dyed-in-the-wool bureaucrat. Gandhi was thrown out of the Political Agent's house. The Englishman had brushed him aside as he would do a mere fly that irritated him—he was not to know that in the years to come this man was to cause greater British politicians than himself many a headache. He did not know that he had insulted and heaped with ignominy the man who was to be the accredited leader of the Indian people. Had he known he would probably have said—what of that? For such people, and many still abound, India is for the British, the Indians are there to merely serve their masters. Freshly returned from Europe this humiliation deeply mortified Gandhi, who had received friendliness and courtesy from Britons and even from this very man while in England. It was then that he learnt for the first time that there is no appeal, no justice in India against a British high official. He could do nothing but pocket his insult.

After this incident and having come into contact with petty intrigues that worried the people of the state, the atmosphere of Rajkot grew unbearable for him and he sought some way of getting out of it. The opportunity was provided by one Dada Abdullah, a Memon merchant, to go to South Africa and legally advise his firm on a case involving a large sum of money. Gandhi gladly availed

himself of it, even though it meant a temporary separation from his family, he did not hesitate to take advantage of the chance provided. Little did any person, least of all he himself, realise what significance this simple fact was to have later in the national life of India. It may be taken as the starting point of a career that is linked up with the many misfortunes this country has had to face; it is the pivot of much that Gandhi caused to happen in India and the many strong characters that came into the arena of political life through his influence. That offer of Dada Abdullah and his acceptance was like the first sprouting of a blade of green that was to grow into a gracious, spreading tree of many branches.

Gandhi knew nothing of what' had to be faced in South Africa or anything about the treatment of Indians, but from the time his boat docked at Durban he noticed the change in manner of the European towards himself and the other Indians. He was equally aware of the attitude of servility which many of the tradesmen—rich and prosperous but unlettered—would employ in the presence of a white man. At that moment it was a mere *souffçon* of something that stirred him, later he was to know that all Indians were synonymous with the one word "coolie" in the mind of the white man. Whether he be educated or illiterate, a rich merchant or indentured labour to the white man he was a "coolie". This national insult India had to face and tolerate, and still has to (*vide* the Pegging Act) from the descendants of half-baked Dutch and British. Racial discrimination and distinction is not the prerogative of the Nazi only but is rampant within the British "Commonwealth". Its virulence has not abated even slightly since Gandhi's South African days, circumstances may have changed and the people like him may have wrested certain concessions from the South African Government but the spirit remains as intolerable as ever. This position must continue until India has wrested com-

plete freedom from British Imperialism—once her own self-respect has been attained then only can she obtain respect from others.

When, however, Dada Abdullah's representative met Gandhi at the boat he was truly puzzled as to what help this strange, anglicised young man could give him. The case was being heard at Pretoria, quite a distance away, and how could he entrust a stranger with such important matters when he himself would not be there to keep an eye on him. He was afraid in case Gandhi was bribed by the other side. However he was persuaded and Gandhi had himself enrolled at the court in Pretoria. The first day in court, when he went as a visitor, he was asked to remove his turban. Feeling that this was an insult upon his nationality he walked out. He had resolved to wear a hat instead rather than submit to this rule, but his new friends persuaded him that he must preserve his Indian identity even at the cost of conforming to the insulting procedure rather than look like a "boy" in his European head gear. This was his first taste of what it meant to other than white in South Africa. His second experience was when he was travelling from Durban to Pretoria on a first class ticket, he was thrown out mid-way because a white passenger objected to a black man in his compartment and he was asked to go into the guard's van. As he declined he was obliged to spend a whole night shivering in the cold in the station at Maritzburg. This was his introduction to colonial life in the British Empire. In a lesser man it would have produced a bitterness bent on revenge, in him it created a thirst for justice without the slightest trace of embitterment. Throughout his life, step by step, Gandhi has but echoed Christ's: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

The case having been concluded satisfactorily Gandhi prepared to leave for India, but Sheth Abdullah (his employer's South African representative) was determined

that he should have a proper send-off. Thus a large party with the Indian residents was arranged for him, at which he intended presenting a purse to Gandhi expressing the firm's appreciation of his services. Fate moves in strange ways, it was inevitable that Gandhi must be linked up with the Indian struggle and affairs were moving that way, leading him on. At this party, he began idly scanning some local papers, and an insignificant paragraph entitled "Indian Franchise" caught his eye and then his interest. It was a few lines regarding a Bill to disfranchise the Indian residents of Natal. This final seal of humiliation and ignominy was like a fiery brand upon his soul, and he turned to his countrymen demanding the cause. Mournfully they shook their heads, explaining that they understood nothing of politics and only knew their trade. Then one of them said that they had originally been given franchise as a ramp so that one individual could get into the House of Representatives, and it really had no meaning for the Indian community. Gandhi patiently explained the full implications to them, and when they understood they were at a loss as to what to do, somebody was needed to lead them, they were willing to be led. As if with inspiration they turned upon Gandhi saying that the only solution was that he should remain with them for yet a while longer and guide them along this path. There was no option for him, he saw this was the only way. So on the eve of his departure for home, he cancelled his arrangements and threw in his lot with the Indians in South Africa.

## C H A P T E R III

### IS GANDHI COMMUNAL?

MR. JINNAH never ceases to assert that Gandhiji is communal minded, that in reality he is only concerned in establishing a Hindu dictatorship over the Muslim masses. Hindus, on the other hand, give this belief wider credence by keeping on repeating that Gandhi is an out and out Hindu after all, so we can rely on him to look to our interests. *Brahmins* and upper caste-Hindus however look upon him with trepidation on account of his championhip of the untouchables. But all these rabid sections do him grave injustice and have caused rumours that are untrue to float about his head.

Gandhi is a Hindu, he is born of a Vaishnav family and from his babyhood he has heard the *Rama-nama* from his nurse's lips. His childhood was spent in the shadow of Vaishnavite temples, where his mother was a devoted worshipper. Thus it certainly was Hindu philosophy with its culture and rituals that made the first impressions on his mind. He was very much attached to Hindu religious tales and devotional songs, and he has retained even up to this day much of his childhood's impressions. He is specially fond of Mirabai's *bhajans* or devotional rhapsodies in praise of the divine Krishna ; they are always sung at every one of his prayer meetings. Their appeal is universal for they eulogize the Divine Spirit but primarily they are a paean to Krishna. These Gandhiji still loves and one feels that they are a cry-back to his boyhood and the *Haveli* or Vaishnav temple his mother and family used to frequent. But Gandhi's belief can be expressed by just one sentence from his own mouth : "Truth is God", and in search of this he has come into contact with

the other great religions of the world—Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.

(It is not unnatural that one who is born and bred in Hinduism should find in his earliest recollections the different facets of this religion.) But even at an early age he disliked the pomp and splendour which surround temples, and in particular he was disgusted with the tales of immorality which he heard were prevalent within the precincts. It created such a feeling of disgust as one would experience if one found an overflowing refuse bin in the midst of a lovely, marbelled terrace. A child's mind is curiously clear and he can differentiate much more minutely between the real and the fake than an adult who is inclined to compromise and feign blindness. So it was with Gandhi in his boyhood, yet he would be simply rapt in adoration when he heard the *Ramayana* recited by one Ladha Maharaj—a real devotee of Rama. During the elder Gandhi's illness this man would come and read out of Tulsidas's *Ramayana* to the invalid in his melodious voice, which enthralled Gandhi, then a boy of little more than fourteen. This bred in him a love for the great epic which has lasted him till now. His real acquaintance with the other great book of Hindu devotional literature, *Bhagavad Geeta*, came much later; in fact it was in England that in the company of two English friends he read the Sanskrit and English versions of the sacred book, though he had heard it recited at Rajkot on every eleventh day of the moon.) But it was years later that its recitation by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya during one of his fasts brought its significance closer to the heart of Gandhi.

Youthful emotions strike deep roots but Gandhi found it hard to reconcile the high ideals of the Hindu religion with untouchability and treatment of the depressed classes, superstitions and cruel orthodoxy. (He felt that there was something vitally wrong, but being young

he could not analyse what was really the matter.) Christian missionaries did not hesitate to point out the abuses of the Hindu religion which no thinking mind could deny and for a time this filled Gandhi with sorrow and disgust. (His great bulwark at this time was his friendship with the poet Raja Chandra or Raychandbhai who was also a well-known businessman and a connoisseur of gems. But the main theme of his life was how to live in the ways of God. He was only 25 when he met Gandhi who himself could not have been more than 21 but he made an impression of truth and righteousness upon him that has lasted them both their lives. Thus it was to this searcher after truth that he brought his problems and doubts regarding religious beliefs and he by his advice and guidance steered him on towards the correct path. (Gandhi has acknowledged that three men of his age have left lasting impressions on his mind—Raychandbhai by his precepts, example and friendship, Ruskin by his book "Unto this last" and Tolstoy by his "The Kingdom of God is within you".)

During his early S. African days when so many religious influences were seeking to determine his path, when he was perturbed by the intricacies of the Hindu caste system, by the fact that the *Vedas* were regarded as the only "inspired words of God", if so what of the Bible and the Koran? He turned again and again to Raychandbhai for counsel and corresponded with him and various other authorities on religion in India.) Most of them advised him to a closer study of Hinduism, and to look at its religious fundamentals shorn of its outward excrescences. (Raychandbhai, in particular, exhorted him to greater study of the religion reiterating that after considerable thought and study he had found that "no other religion has the subtle and profound thought of Hinduism, its vision of the soul or its clarity".) Such ideals and sentiments spurred him on to greater comparative study

of all religions. At this period he came into contact with Edward Maitland by correspondence, who introduced him to books on independent thoughts on Christianity which repudiated the current beliefs of that faith. Simultaneously Gandhi read Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God is within you".) and was completely overwhelmed by its magnitude of thought. Maitland also sent him "A New Interpretation of the Bible" which was so allied to Hindu theories and belief that it spurred him along to understanding better the faith of his fathers. Raychandbhai also continued to keep him supplied with the theological literature of Hinduism, which helped to stabilise his beliefs while his innate love of truth and justice did not blind him to the faulty traditions the religion had encrusted itself with during the centuries. These were no more a part of the intrinsic truth of Hindu philosophy than the pearl is of the oyster, like the pearl they were diseases that had become part of the structure.

Gandhi's first contact with Christianity was the unfortunate experience that falls to the lot of most Indians, and has the effect of creating a great antagonism towards the religion. (A missionary standing at the street corners near the High School which Gandhi attended and reviling the Hindu religion was his first experience of a Christian; the next was a convert who adopted European clothes and took to meat and alcohol describing this as a part of the Christian religion.) Thus it is not to be wondered if the thought of Christianity failed at this stage to conjure up any other feeling in him except repugnance. (He could not reconcile the fact of any religion that called upon its converts to revile the faith of their forefathers and take to alcohol etc.) Yet his training had been of extreme tolerance, as his father was accustomed to receiving visitors of all religions and faiths who engaged upon learned discourses and as his father's nurse young Gandhi would be a silent but interested participator in these conclaves.

Therefore he was able to keep his mind entirely free of bias, and shocked though he was at his first contacts with Christianity, he was more than willing, nay anxious, to revise his opinions under the proper atmosphere. During his visit to England he met and became friendly with many Christians and found among them faith, belief and charity. Many were vegetarians and eating flesh or imbibing alcohol he found was not a vital part of Christianity.

(It was actually during his first visit to S. Africa that he came into contact with the ardent and sincere proselytising spirit of Christianity. Through a certain Mr. Baker, the attorney for the firm he was representing, he came into the *milieu* of devoted Christians who from the beginning never ceased their efforts in converting him. It was a small prayer group, who interceded with God for his conversion.) They were utterly sincere and since they had a very high regard for him they were anxious for his salvation. But Gandhi could never quite reconcile himself to the idea of needing a mediator between man and God, and why if Christ were the son of God the other great spirits should not be. His friends were aghast at what they called his ignorance, and referred him to the Bible. He gladly read it from the beginning to the end; the Old Testament with its "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" philosophy did not appeal to him but he loved the New Testament and the Sermon on the Mount went straight to his heart. His admiration for Christ as a great teacher and martyr for the cause of truth was intense but he could not accept the basic principles of the Bible that unless you were a Christian you could not be saved. He refused to believe that the great spirits of the other faiths were damned because they were not Christians. Thus from the beginning his friends were fighting a losing battle by virtue of the very bigotry of their beliefs.

(One of those who took a great interest in saving his soul was a Mr. Coates, a young and devout Christian

who had taken a great liking for Gandhi and appreciated his moral attitude to life. He was determined to save this soul who by sheer ignorance (according to Mr. Coates) was content and proud to remain a heathen. He found his "pupil" extraordinarily free from bigotry and amenable to reason, but never could he understand why Gandhi found his interpretation of Christianity unreasonable and difficult to accept.) So bent was he in delivering Gandhiji from himself that one day seeing a string of sacred *tulsi* beads round his neck he asked his permission to break them. Gandhiji protested vehemently that he would never allow that since it had been put round his neck by his mother, and Mr. Coates remarked more in sorrow than in anger: "This superstition does not become you!" His failure to convince Gandhi on this issue did not discourage him, and he kept on introducing him to other Christians. One of these was a Plymouth Brother who shocked the young aspirant to knowledge by giving him the kernel of his sect's belief—that Christ had been sent to bear the sins of all mankind, therefore it was not for an individual to moan over his sins; if he believed in Christ the redemption was assured since the burden of his sin would be cleansed by Jesus without any special effort on the sinner's part. He had only to believe in Christ. So amazed was Gandhi at this interpretation that he told the Plymouth Brother that he found this even more irreconcilable than all the others that had been furnished to him before this, and he could not believe that all Christians thought similarly. Mr. Coates was truly distressed by this encounter. There was yet another family of Christians in S. Africa whom he came to know later, and who were profoundly shocked at his assertion that Buddha and Mohammad were as great spirits as Christ, and that Buddha's compassion surpassed even that of Jesus because it was extended to animals as well. Their narrow-minded souls could not appreciate the magnitude of this utterance,

or the absolute reverence and tolerance underlying it. Thus his Christian contacts spurred him on to the greater study of his own faith—Hinduism, as well as to the comparative study of all religions. While he valued the friendship of those who had tried to compass his salvation by Christianity their intolerance of other faiths gave him a greater incentive to acquire knowledge of all religions. Later in life C. F. Andrews became one of his greatest friends, and one in whom he found the correct conception of a Christian gentleman. The same description is applicable to Horace Alexander, the gentle Quaker, who though much younger than Gandhiji enjoyed his friendship and appreciated the greatness of his spirit and his beliefs. However, the difficulty of his acceptance of the Christian faith lay primarily and principally in the fact of his inability to accept the orthodox interpretation of the Bible.

While in England, during his student days, Gandhi came into contact with two brothers who were theosophists, and in their company he read the Gita in English and in Sanskrit; it was they who acquainted him with Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia" and "The Song Celestial". He read both avidly, and the former sang the theme song of *ahimsa* into his heart. The brothers took him to theosophist gatherings where he met Madame Blavatsky, and saw Mrs. Besant who had recently renounced atheism to become a theosophist. He was given literature on theosophy, and asked to become a member of the society but he refused on the grounds that his knowledge of religion was not so profound as to enable him to become a member of any group with conviction. At this time he also had a nodding acquaintance with atheism, which in that age was being created as an offset against the reactions which religion was imposing upon the people. It was the actual backwash of the Victorian era. But not even Bradlaugh, the exponent of atheism, could make much impression on Gandhi. He was willing to be pro-

gressive but not at the expense of his beliefs. He believed in God, he never had any two opinions of that but his search was for the true and correct method of approaching him. Even in his youth he would never rationalise religion, its mysticism held a never-failing appeal for him and while his tolerance was great he could not tolerate the denial of God. Buddhism created an immense feeling within him. He found in it that depth of vision which he had failed to find in Christianity. The scope of Buddhism was boundless in embracing all living creatures, it nourished within the smallest animal the divine flame. *Ahimsa* won him over and Gautama Buddha's life and example remained wondrously luminous before him. There was no differentiation here, no castes, no sects, just the devotion of a life-time to truth, tolerance and non-violence. It had in it in an undistilled form all the original ingredients of Hindu philosophy that had not become carped or been misused. Gautama was a Hindu, and Gandhi found nothing irreconcilable in his theory of life.

If in his first days in S. Africa his Christian friends were bent on introducing him to Christianity, his Muslim friends were no less anxious to convert him to Islam, and he was more than willing to familiarize himself with the writings of the Prophet and the ethics of Islam. He read the Koran with grave interest and obtained much that was vital and living out of it. But he was never tempted to adopt the faith, while he was anxious to acquaint himself with the religious principles of Islam. He also read a book called the "Sayings of Zarathustra", which appeared to contain much that is common in most religious philosophies and were set down as a rule for one's conduct in life.

It will be seen that Gandhiji from his early youth associated himself with all faiths and beliefs. He approached them with an open mind with an anxiety to find the truth and live according to it. That he has remained

a Hindu is after much deliberation, and in spite of the fact that though to him its philosophy has the correct approach, he feels its deficiencies in the way it has allowed tradition and convention to overwhelm its intrinsic contents. Against the most tragic of these—the question of untouchables he has hurled himself time and again. If for nothing but only this his name will be hallowed in this country. Why then do people call him communal? He is not ignorant and he is not bigoted, his religious vision is vast and he has never failed to practise his tolerance. He is undoubtedly the person who has the greatest power over the masses in India, and thus if any political capital is to be made out against him it must be on a false basis of communal differences. This is bureaucracy's game, and communal leaders are playing it for them. The only other pawn against the living spirit of nationalism is communalism; religious fanaticism is being set off against this tide of political consciousness that is coming to the people. Therefore the flag is unfurled that Islam is in danger, that Gandhi seeks only the Hindu superiority over the Muslim masses. The tragedy lies in this that such propaganda has been possible because nationalist India did not anticipate it and did not make a bid for their allegiance. Gandhi and the Congress were content to get thinking Muslims of the intelligentsia amongst them, unsuspecting or rather unable to visualise that other elements might utilise the ignorance of the Muslim masses for their own ends and thus injure the cause of India's freedom. This has given credence, at least amongst the Muslims, that Gandhi is communal. They have forgotten the Khilafat Movement, his friendship with the Ali Brothers, his reverence for Hakim Ajmal Khan and his confidence in Maulana Abul Kalam Azad; all that is said of him is that he is first and foremost a Hindu and only sees to their interests. Yet it was he who gave way to separate electorates when all others were for joint electorates; he did it to safeguard

Muslim representation while knowing how harmful separate electorates could be if wrongly handled. He had faith that the Muslims would not betray his confidence.

Much capital has been made by the Muslim League and the British Government over his difference with Rajagopalachariar on the Pakistan issue. Had the Muslims put it as self-determination I doubt whether Gandhiji would have opposed it; on the point of vivisection of India he, as any patriot would be, was violently opposed. Rajagopalachariar took a realistic point of view that if by this recognition we can achieve a united front with the League let us do so, and use it as a lever against the British Government and foil their attempts to show disunity. Gandhiji took the honest and idealistic point of view that unless one were fully convinced of the rights of the Pakistan argument it was not fair to agree to it as part of the political game. It was a point of conscience which Gandhiji put first and foremost; Rajaji put national freedom before other considerations. To us who are obsessed with the desire for freedom as the right of every individual, we feel that concessions have to be made and for this achievement let us make them. But Gandhiji was concerned with fundamentals and he felt that truth and conviction were above everything else. Perhaps his was the better lot, nay it must be, but India is impatient for freedom and any expediency towards its achievement seems excusable, especially in view of the fact that such an imputation of communalism has been created over this issue with Rajagopalachariar.

Gandhi is not communal, his deeds have shown his tolerance towards all throughout his life. He is a saint, whose mysticism has removed him to a higher plane where he is governed by truth which in political life is difficult of understanding. He has shown right through his tendency for compromise to save any drastic situation, and in this matter of Hindus and Muslims he is no less

reasonable. By his own words he has proved that he can reconcile all religions in the universality of faith. Because he has remained a Hindu it does not mean that he believes that a true Christian or Muslim is not as acceptable in the sight of God. These principles govern his daily life as they do his public life. Therefore it is impossible to believe that he deliberately wishes to impose the will of the Hindu majority upon the minorities. Had he wished to identify himself wholly with Hindu interests he would not have taken up the question of the untouchables, and thus antagonise a powerful section of caste Hindus. He believes that there is room for all—including the minorities large and small—in the pattern of national life without cutting off parts of India for their exclusive habitat and use. *Their interests must be safeguarded, and I do not think that Gandhi would hesitate to guarantee them.* But the fact that he is against the establishment of an "Ulster" in India is no grounds for labelling him as communal. He may have failed or neglected to achieve a correct approach to the Muslim masses, which will be regarded as a political blunder, but his priority of principles cannot be denied.

Here are tributes paid to him by Muslims, who are not Congress minded, and hold important posts in state and government service. Sir Mirza Ismail, once Dewan of Mysore, now Dewan of Jaipur, has said: "During those days I met the Mahatma as often as I could, and the reverence, love, and affection he then inspired in me have formed the basis of a friendship which I have cherished and valued ever since . . . It is the Mahatma's absolute sincerity of purpose and purity of motives combined with a sterling personal character that have won for him the confidence and affection not only of his own political followers but of many people outside the Congress organisation who neither share all his views, nor subscribe to his political doctrines and methods." Sir Abdul Qadir who was adviser to the Secretary of State for India in 1930

characterises Gandhi as the "Statesman in Beggar's Garb" and fits to his personality the lines: "The heart of a king trembles at the sight of a beggar who begs not." Both Sir Mirza and Sir Abdul are well-known Muslims and have little sympathy with Gandhi's political ideals, yet neither of them have been niggardly in their tributes to him. What other testimony of his universality does the world desire?

During his fast for Hindu-Muslim unity at Delhi in September, 1924, he said clearly: "I ask of no Hindu or Mussulman to surrender an iota of his religious principle. Only let him be sure that it is religion. But I do ask of every Hindu and Mussulman not to fight for an earthly gain."

In his own words one can sum up his approach to all faiths and creeds: "My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the *Gita*, the Light of Asia and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly."

## C H A P T E R I V

### SOUTH AFRICAN DAYS

(With the decision to remain in Natal, sponsoring the cause of Indians, the button was pressed for the launching of Gandhi into the political field. S. Africa was merely preparatory to the part he was to play in the wider field of Indian politics. Of course the principal actor was still unaware of the rôle that had been designed for him, he was yet a minor character, the political horizon in India being filled by people of the stature of Dadabhai Naoroji, Tilak and Gokhale. Gandhi served his apprenticeship in S. Africa which equipped him for the bigger struggle whose leadership was to fall upon him)

(With minute thoroughness Gandhi set up a working organisation embracing all Indians and for the first time in S. Africa the master and servant found themselves working together for the common cause of their people.) It was an amazing experience and just as the rich merchants poured money into the enterprise, the poorer Indians gave of their labour and their enthusiasm.) Thus what had been considered a minor issue—the disfranchisement of Indians—developed into a major crisis. (The S. Africans were bewildered at the rising consciousness of Indians regarding their disabilities. Christians, Muslims, Parsis and Hindus found themselves ranked side by side in this initial struggle for national self-respect.) The Bill had passed its second reading in the House, when a telegram was despatched to the Speaker asking him to postpone further discussion as the Indians had something to say on the point.) A petition was written and signatures collected and despatched to the Assembly and to the Press; in spite of it all the Bill disfranchising Indians was passed. Finally ten thousand signatures were collected from all over the province and a monster petition was despatched to Lord Ripon, the then Colonial Secretary. (Gandhi himself wrote the petition pointing out the necessity of franchise for the Indians in Natal who were an important minority community. For the first time in England and in India the disabilities of Indians in S. Africa were given wide publicity, and such papers as the London and Bombay Times commented sympathetically on it.) The Indians cherished great hopes that the Bill would be ultimately vetoed.) This was however not achieved until years later, but (this movement was successfully knitting the Indian community in a closer bond, each and everyone giving of their best for the establishment of their national identity.

(But Gandhi also realised that petitions were good enough but not sufficient, they must be backed by agitation and to compass this the Natal Indian Congress came into

being, with Gandhi as secretary. This step was greeted with great enthusiasm and the Indians in S. Africa felt for once that at last they belonged, and the organisational strength of the Congress brought new incentives into their lives. Thus it became imperative that Gandhi should consider his stay in S. Africa on a permanent basis, and in this there was the financial question to be considered. The Natal Congress was very much an organization of the rich because membership fees were made deliberately high to ensure a substantial fund from which to draw, but the poorer Indians had a right to its protection and advice when in need. This class of rich merchants who were at the helm of the Congress insisted that Gandhi's services were essential for which they were willing to pay him. But he was not willing to accept this since he felt it his patriotic duty to carry on the work in hand; however he consented to accept a retaining fee from twenty merchants for undertaking their legal work—this amounted to his bare expense of £300 per annum and with this guarantee he settled down in Natal for what was the first phase in his political career.

Indentured labour was a part of S. African life which was little different from slavery. These labourers were Indians imported to do hard work on plantations and farms, and they could only be indentured by Europeans and once having signed their period of contract they could not be released from it. Their masters had the power of life and death over them. The history of their introduction into S. Africa is yet another instance of Britain's quibbling policy and of exploitation. The inducements held out to Indian labour was that they should contract to work for five years and then have the right to settle down there with the full ownership of the land. But the Europeans in S. Africa had not taken the intelligence and adaptability of the Indians into consideration, and they viewed with alarm not only their skill as agriculturists but their ventures into

trade. Therefore they agitated that on the expiry of their indenture they be repatriated to India, or be prepared to pay a tax of £25. This proposal was put up to the Government of India. These labourers were not members of the Natal Indian Congress, because they could not afford to pay the high rate of membership, but Gandhi had come into contact with them over individual cases of injustice which he and the Congress had tackled to the best of their ability. This created a feeling of confidence in the Congress, and on the occasion of the £25 tax Gandhi urged the Congress to agitate against it and create general public opinion abroad in favour of vetoing the tax. But with a view to nursing European influence in S. Africa Lord Elgin, the then Viceroy, did not turn the proposal down as he should have, if he were interested in safeguarding the Indians, but agreed to bringing it down to £3 per adult. This in itself was a gross injustice since it meant that in the normal Indian family comprising the parents and two adult children (girls above 13, boys above 16) a tax of £12 would have to be paid where the average income of the father was never more than 14 shillings a month. The Natal Congress continued its agitation over a period of twenty years before they could obtain its abolition.

(Gandhi had settled down to legal practice in Natal not without trouble and opposition.) He was brought face to face with the colour bar early in his career when he sought enrolment in the courts. At this stage he came up against the Law Society which tried its utmost to stop his enrolment, but finally they could not keep him back. He fought for his rights step by step and all he had to concede finally was his turban. When the Chief Justice swore him in, he told him that he must give up the turban. His friends looked upon his compliance as a sign of weakness but he felt that by this compromise he would be saving himself for greater and bigger struggles. He managed to carve out a decent practice for

himself, and his early struggles with the Law Society served as an advertisement for him since much public sympathy was on his side. For three years he continued his political work and his legal career, gradually establishing himself and his reputation until he felt that since he must settle in Natal he would like to fetch his family. With this thought and also the idea that it would be a good opportunity whereby to inform Indians of the conditions of their compatriots in South Africa, he availed himself of six months' leave in 1896 and sailed for India. During the voyage he devoted himself to the study of Urdu with the object of being able to make himself understood to Muslims, also Tamil because of his great love for the S. Indian labourers whose cause he had espoused in Natal. Gandhiji says that the greater part of his education in these languages has been compassed in jails—Tamil in S. African jails and Urdu in Yervada Jail.

During his stay in India Gandhi set about seeing how he could bring the disabilities of Indians in S. Africa home to the people of this country. Throughout his labours during these early years one is impressed by the fact that he believed in the will of the British Government to help the cause of Indians, and at every step he sought co-operation and was prepared to co-operate. His first step was to write a pamphlet and publicise his mission, and then he sought the help of powerful public figures such as Justice Ranade, Justice Badruddin Tyebji and Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. All of them were vitally interested in all that Gandhi had to say, but it was Sir Pherozeshah Mehta who organised a public meeting in Bombay for this purpose and this was Gandhi's first appearance to plead the cause of India on the public platform. The hall was packed to overflowing, the student community being in the forefront, but at the right moment Gandhi's voice failed miserably and somebody else had to read out his speech which was received enthusiastically by the

audience and their cries gladdened the sponsor's heart that at last here was real sympathy.) Sir Pherozeshah Mehta commented favourably upon it and Gandhi felt that India was truly listening to the cause of her children abroad.

Gandhi then set about contacting the newspapers, trying to get them to take up the S. African question. He had already seen the Editor of the *Pioneer* in Allahabad, who while not promising to support the claim of Indians in S. Africa, said that he was prepared to consider and comment upon it. Always obsessed with a sense of justice Gandhi remained satisfied with this. In fact the *Pioneer's* favourable comments on his pamphlet was cabled by *Reuters* to England, and a much distorted version found its way to S. Africa which was to have severe repercussions later. When Gandhi came to Calcutta the big papers like the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Bangabasi* showed him scant consideration, often keeping him waiting for hours. Similarly Surendranath Banerjee and others like him more than a little cold-shouldered him. But surprisingly the editor of the *Englishman* took him up and after thoroughly cross-examining him he was convinced of the bona-fides of his case. He left the columns of his paper free to Gandhi to express his views. This was really an extremely fortunate encounter in the many failures he met with on his Calcutta visit. Since the majority of indentured labourers were S. Indians, he was greeted with every consideration by the Madras papers, and the editors set themselves to help him in his campaign through their editorial columns. The *Madras Standard* in particular went all out to help him. The indifference of Bengal at this juncture may have been due to the fact that the province was being harassed beyond measure and also the fact that Bengalis were not involved in this controversy. The idea of inter-provincial amity had not yet become universal, the idea of a united India was to

materialise later out of the fast developing tempo of political movements. (In 1896 inter-provincial rivalry was rampant.)

(In his efforts to create a feeling for the Indians in S. Africa he was advised to meet the two giants of that time—Tilak and Gokhale, in order to enlist their sympathies and help. Gandhi was deeply impressed with Tilak and on his advice sought out Dr. Bhandarkar, as a non-party man, to take the lead in the matter. Tilak's approach to the problem was direct, vigorous and forceful. With Gokhale, however, Gandhi felt more at ease and a sense of familiarity in his attitude. Here too he met with sympathy and understanding together with a spirit of co-operation. He felt genuinely drawn towards Gokhale; while for Tilak his admiration was unbounded it was Gokhale who won his confidence straight away. Thus with the knowledge that no longer was India ignorant of the sufferings of her sons abroad, strengthened by the sympathetic feeling he left behind him, (Gandhi sailed with his wife and children for the home of his adoption—Natal. His wife, with the characteristic attitude of Indian women towards their husbands, was happy to be able to accompany him even though the idea of a strange land and strange people frightened her. Wearing shoes and stockings was an uncomfortable experience for her and her children, yet they willingly did all that Gandhi desired of them even to learning to eat with knives and forks. Kasturba took to the Parsi *sari*, then considered the most modern and advanced form of the Indian dress, and the children too were dressed in the Parsi style for boys with long coats and trousers. Gandhi was determined that they would not disgrace them in his new surroundings with the countrified air of Kathiawadi *banias*. Therefore he forced this metamorphosis upon them. As one looks back upon the man who has promulgated *swadeshi* and *khadi* this phase of extreme ad-

miration for Western civilisation seems inevitable for him to realise the uselessness of it. How easily he shook off its shackles once he realised the utter falseness of it as applied to India.

Unconscious of the hostile reception awaiting him, Gandhi sailed from Bombay in a boat belonging to Dada Abdullah and Co., looking forward to his work in S. Africa. Yet another steamer called the *Naderi* also put out with a large number of Indians in it for Durban. On their arrival after a voyage of 18 days, Gandhi's boat was put into quarantine for 5 days because there had been plague in Bombay when the boat left that port; a similar ban was placed upon the *Naderi*. Supremely unaware of the real cause of this ban, the passengers awaited the end of the quarantine. In the meantime the real news trickled through to Gandhi that owing to press distortion of certain of his speeches and writings the enraged European population were holding monster meetings banning the landing of Gandhi in South Africa, on the plea that he had grossly misrepresented the behaviour of the Europeans in Natal when in India; that he had deliberately brought two shiploads of Indians to settle in South Africa and that these should be immediately sent back to India. In fact they threatened that unless the passengers returned to their own country dire consequences would follow their landing. Despite such threats the passengers demanded that they be allowed to land at the port of Durban.

Word was sent through that it would be better if Gandhi did not land before night, since the enraged white population might not be answerable for their actions. Acting on the advice of Mr. Laughton, the solicitor to Dada Abdullah and Co., Gandhi declined to steal into Durban as a thief by night, so having sent his family on ahead in a carriage he, accompanied by Mr. Laughton, walked out from the pier in broad daylight. What fol-

lowed baffles description. He was surrounded by a howling mob of young Europeans pelting him with stones, rotten eggs etc., and beating him up. He escaped being lynched through the timely arrival of Mrs. Alexander, the wife of the Superintendent of Police, who stood between him and the mob. Totally innocent of the charges levelled at him, Gandhi refused to prosecute his assailants even though the matter went up before the Secretary of State and had his backing. This refusal did much to enhance his prestige and that of Indians in general than if he had identified and brought one or two of the rowdies to book. This then was the reception that awaited Gandhi on his return from India, but undaunted, he renewed his labours for his fellow countrymen with unabated vigour.

(The five years between 1896 and 1901 which Gandhi spent in South Africa included periods of service for the British Government during the Zulu rebellion and the Boer War. He had two more sons born to him in South Africa, and much of his time was also occupied in the duties of a husband and a father, as well as with his practice at the Bar. But he was gradually developing a way of simple living from a sense of economy as well as necessity, and he enjoyed the idea of self-help and being free from slavery to servants etc. He learnt all the intricacies of laundry work even to starching his collars; then because an European barber refused to attend to him he even took to cutting his own hair. At the start he was the target of much humour owing to his unevenly cut hair but his reply soon silenced all taunts: "The white barber would not condescend to touch my black hair, so I preferred to cut it myself, no matter how badly."

In the Boer War, although his sympathies were with the Boers, Gandhi felt that as a subject of the British Empire he must throw in his lot with the British and help them. Accordingly with the help of his European friends, he organised a Red Cross unit 1,100 strong and served

within the firing line. The unit earned much praise for heroism and service, and was mentioned in despatches. During this period the relationship between Indians and whites was very cordial as if there was true appreciation of the sacrifice the Indians had made.

Ever ready to improve the lot of Indians, Gandhi was not blind towards their faults, and the neglect of sanitation and hygiene was the principal of these in their civic lives. So after the Boer War he turned his attention towards this, and it was an uphill task to instil a consciousness for hygienic ways of living into the Indian population. By example, help and exhortation he took them along step by step through bitter misunderstanding and disillusionment. But he persevered and succeeded. Yet another seed he sowed within them was a sense of duty towards India, their poverty-stricken motherland. Many Indians in South Africa were rich, richer than their compatriots in India, and therefore Gandhi instilled within them a feeling of duty towards their homeland. Thus during the famine of 1897 in India the South African Indians contributed handsomely for relief. The seeds were bearing fruit. In 1901 Gandhi decided that his work in South Africa was for the moment over and that he should return to India.

His sojourn in India, and disappearance from South African politics was short-lived. In 1901 he obtained permission from his friends to return to India, on the strict understanding that he would always be at their call when they needed him. Gandhi agreed, and the community loaded him with gifts of money and presents. Kasturba was young and loved jewels only as young Indian women do; they love to wear them and then put them away for their children. But Gandhi was adamant that these tokens of love and service were not their personal possessions and should be made into a trust fund for the Natal Congress to operate. His wife wept and stormed

but he had his way, and perhaps later in life she realised the wisdom of this renunciation that they who possess nothing are afraid of losing nothing. That has been the secret of Gandhiji's always just having to ask to receive funds for his undertakings. Then they were both young, and Kasturba only blamed her husband for his sternness.

( On his return to India Gandhi was plunged into the activities of the Congress, and attended its Calcutta session, while preparing to take up practice in Bombay. He was amazed with the brilliancy of the Congress session under the presidentship of Sir Dinshaw Waccha with Tilak and Gokhale to share the limelight. A resolution on South Africa was proposed by Gandhi after having been looked over by Sir Dinshaw, and he was delighted at the response it evoked. Two significant facts emerged from this meeting which showed the growing consciousness for something more than was being achieved—one of these was Sir Pherozeshah Mehta's remark: "I believe that so long as we have no power in our own land, you cannot fare better in the colonies." The other was Gandhi's own observation that "the Congress would meet for three days every year and then go to sleep." A third significant fact was that seeing the latrines unclean and filthy and the volunteers saying "That is not our work, it is the scavengers' work," Gandhi took a broom and with his own hands cleaned the latrines. These points reflected even then the goal for which India's national movement was heading. Gandhi's impressions of the grandeur of the Congress were a mixture of feelings composed of regret at the want of concrete action, waste of time, but also enthusiasm, brilliancy and above all the building up of a national organisation.

During his stay in India his friendship with Gokhale ripened, and it was the older man who tried to overcome Gandhi's diffidence and introduced him to many people

and also invited him to spend some time with him.) It was a great opportunity for one who was becoming more and more interested in the fate of his country, and a privilege to study at first hand one who was a builder of the nation. This month spent in Gokhale's company was memorable in more ways than one. He passed the time in Calcutta in meeting prominent persons and acquainting them with the South African conditions and taking journeys into the sphere of religion. The sight of the Kali temple and the sacrifices oppressed him and he found it hard to reconcile it with the aesthetic and intellectual qualities of the Bengalis. Sir (then Dr.) P. C. Ray remained outstanding in his memory for his erudition; his simplicity and his sincerity. According to Gandhiji, in the years that have followed, P. C. Ray had only changed from *swadeshi* mill cloth to *khadi*. Gandhiji under the ægis of Gokhale met eminent Brahmos and well-known Christians as well as Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita. He was amazed equally at the latter's ostentatious ways of living as well as by her genuine love for Hinduism. Thus the month with Gokhale proved as educative as enjoyable. On his return trip to Bombay via Benares Gandhi for the first time began to travel third class much to the astonishment of Gokhale. He maintains that in no way has the lot of the third class traveller been lightened during these past forty years. He appears to be there on sufferance. Within three or four years of his return to Bombay, he received an urgent summons to return to South Africa: "Chamberlain expected here, please return immediately." With this began the third phase of his South African days.

These last years in South Africa were punctuated by greater and more significant struggle on the part of the Indians, which lasted eight years but at the end of that period some measure of success was secured. Austen Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary, came to South Africa to collect a sum of 35 million pounds, and was there-

fore not disposed to argue the Indians' case against the Europeans. On the other hand he advised them to fall in with the others' wishes. Thus the community found themselves being cold-shouldered at every step. All their war service was forgotten, and new departments arose under the ægis of "European autocrats from Asia" without whose permission no Indian may take up residence in South Africa. Not long after Indians in Johannesburg were deprived of their lands through municipal acquirement. Even though this land was a quarter set apart for Indians or "coolies", without adequate reason they were dispossessed of it with whatever compensation the municipality deemed fit. There was no appeal either against the settlement or the manner of dispossession.

The *Indian Opinion* was founded to ventilate the grievances of Indians and the injustice inflicted upon them, and under the editorship of Gandhi, it became a powerful weapon and continued to mirror faithfully the reaction of Indians throughout the years that followed. The Phoenix Settlement was a new home for the *Indian Opinion* and also Gandhi's first experiment of returning to the land. Phoenix was a farm of 80 acres, possessing a dilapidated cottage and many fruit trees, being located near Durban. It was decided that all the residents should work on the farm on a salary of £3 per month, and attend to the newspaper and press in their leisure. Phoenix was the first of the *ashrams* that were later to spring up in India, first at Sabarmati then at Sevagram, and it had in it all the enthusiasm and idealism plus difficulties that first conceptions usually have. Many of Gandhi's relations came to join him at the settlement, including his wife and children. A general spirit of self-help prevailed; even scavenging was done by the inhabitants. Gandhi spared neither himself nor his friends in this matter, and from all accounts there were not many who objected to it.

Here it is necessary to digress to speak of three Europeans who were intimately associated with Gandhi at this period, two of whom even went to jail with him. Albert West who was a printer, and who on the strength of his friendship for Gandhi left his business in 1904 to look into the overhauling of the *Indian Opinion*. Later he assisted Gandhi in building up the Phoenix settlement ensuring the smooth running of the paper. Henry S. L. Polak who introduced him to Ruskin's "Unto this last" and helped thus in moulding his way of living. He later gave up his own position on the *Critic* to join the settlement. Throughout the years that followed he remained Gandhi's colleague, friend and disciple. At his request he qualified for solicitorship in order to take charge of Gandhi's office at Johannesburg, and during the *satyagraha* days went to jail with him. More than fifty years later, on Gandhiji's seventieth birthday, Polak was to reaffirm his faith: "When the time comes to assess the great men of to-day and to discuss their contribution to the world's thought and practice probably no name will stand out more significantly and constructively than that of India's foremost leader." The third European was Kallenbach, a German architect, who in 1910 gave to Gandhi 1,100 acres free of charge to house and feed the *satyagrahis* and their families when they were in and out of jail. This was the Tolstoy farm in Lawley, to the south of Johannesburg. Kallenbach himself became one of the inmates of the farm, and in 1913 went to jail with Gandhi.

Fresh indignities were being heaped upon the Indians and they were—(1) The ordinance whereby every Indian—man, woman and child—entitled to reside in the Transvaal had to register his or her name with the Registrar of Asiatics and take out a certificate of registration. Every Indian who failed to apply within a certain date was to forfeit his right of residence in the Transvaal.

Failure to apply would be held to be an offence in law for which the defaulter could be fined, sent to prison or even deported within the discretion of the court. (2) Nullification of all marriages that had not been celebrated according to Christian rites or registered by the registrar of marriages, thus arbitrarily nullifying Hindu, Muslim and Parsi marriages. One must add to this the already existing sore of the £3 poll tax. Over this was evolved *satyagraha* or non-violent passive resistance which was to create history not only in South Africa but as well in India. *Satyagraha* presupposes compromise and thus time and again the movement had to be halted to hold parleys with authorities which more than once resulted in utter betrayal by the authorities. It gathered momentum with each fresh insult inflicted upon the Indian people. For eight years the movement continued, resulting in going to jail becoming an honour for Indians. Gandhi was first imprisoned in January 1908 for being in the Transvaal without a permit; his imprisonment was followed by countless Indians most of them hawkers by profession who courted the sentence by deliberately refusing to show their licenses when required. Within a fortnight of this Smuts gave his verbal promise that if a few Indians were to obey the order, he would withdraw the ordinance.

The story of two Pathans needs to be recounted. The idea of compromise or what smacked of yielding was regretted by many of the Indians, and on the day that Gandhi, among many others, was going to give his fingerprints and obtain the required permit as a token of their good faith, Mir Alaim, a Pathan and an old client of his, waylaid him and laid him out flat rather than that he should humiliate himself in this way. The Pathan could not brook the indignity of giving his fingerprint as a convict would, and his passions running loose he gave vent to it in assaulting him who was working for the salva-

tion of his countrymen. Gandhiji refused to prosecute him but the Europeans insisted in doing so and he was sentenced to 3 months' hard labour. The other Pathan was one Saiyad Ibrahim, a mine worker, who was among those who struck work and joined the "Great Trek" in 1913. He bared his back and said to Gandhiji: "Look here, how severely they have thrashed me. I have let the rascals go for your sake, as such are your orders. I am a Pathan, and Pathans don't take but give a beating." To him Gandhiji said: "Well done, brother, I look upon such forbearance as real bravery. We will win through people of your type," and he was right, for, years later hundreds of Pathans took the pledge of non-violence, and many came into the Congress fold sheathing their swords rather than brandishing them to fight the battle of freedom.

Smuts, of course, never kept his promise; instead the ordinance became an act and was entered in the statute book. The *satyagraha* was restarted. On its heels came the marriage nullification order which activated Indian women to leave their homes and babes in arms, to join the movement. It was a grand achievement. Most of them were ill-educated and had never taken part in any public movements, but they rose in one body to fight for their rights and their self-respect. Kasturba Gandhi was foremost in this movement, and courted imprisonment with enthusiasm. The women felt that they had at last been identified with the national struggle. Their example and their courage vitalised the rest of the Indians, and the miners struck work in October 1913—their grievance being the £3 tax—and this was the beginning of the "Great Trek" as Gandhi calls it in his biography, and which was one of his greatest triumphs in *satyagraha*, started from Newcastle and had for its objective the Tolstoy Farm or jail on the way. The Tolstoy Farm had been created for the *satyagrahis* and their families, since

once having joined in the struggle they found it almost impossible to get jobs. Thus in daily contact lived Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Sikhs, ever mindful of the other and sharing each other's fasts and festivals. Their families came, too, and did their part in the running of the farm. There were no servants, the residents performed all the functions; no job was too mean for them.

When the "Great Trek" left Charlestown Gandhiji had an army of 2037 men, 127 women and 57 children. He had already appealed to Smuts regarding the miners' grievances, and the reply he had received was: "General Smuts will have nothing to do with you. You may do just as you please." He had also seen the mineowners, at their request, but he was not successful in making them see the real cause of the strike as the £3 tax. Therefore having exploited all avenues of compromise and *rapprochement* Gandhi put his ultimatum into action and the non-violent army began its march into the Transvaal.<sup>1</sup> He had laid down very definite rules that if the people were dealt with violence by authorities they were not to retort with violence and if they were arrested to go quietly into jail. During the journey from Charlestown to Balfour Gandhi was arrested thrice and released on bail, until his final arrest and trial at Teakworth,<sup>2</sup> Polak, who had been asked by Gokhale to go to India to represent the true facts of the case, had come to him for orders and final instructions, and was also arrested as was Kallenbach for his partisanship of Gandhi and his soldiers. This small army of Indians with Gandhi at their head not threatening, not shouting but merely demanding their rights, was a spectacle that shook even the mightiest in South Africa. After the arrest of Gandhi, the marchers were put into three special trains awaiting them at Balfour and sent back to Natal to the jails. But this had its repurcussions, and the discomfort and tears of the Indians who had stoically

undertaken the trek produced results. None of their sacrifices went in vain. A Commission of Inquiry into the grievances of the Indians was appointed, and as a result of it the £3 tax was repealed, all marriages considered legal in India would also be considered legal in South Africa, and that the right of entry into the Union was permissible with a domicile certificate bearing the holder's thumbprint. Thus all that Gandhi had fought for over 20 years, the awakening which he had engendered within the Indians in South Africa, were all justified in the recognition of their rights to citizenship.

Gandhi spent 21 years of his life in trying to establish Indians in an honourable position in South Africa. Yet even to-day discrimination and victimisation are as rampant and more vicious than before. If his labour saw the repeal of unjust laws, 1943 has witnessed the institution of the shameful Pegging Bill. Thus it seems progress has been nil. This one feels has been caused by the failure of Indians to fraternise and make common cause with the coloured inhabitants of Africa. Towards them Indians cherished a superiority complex. Even Gandhiji, being then of opinion that the British Empire was a beneficial institution, did more fraternising with progressive Europeans than with the Negroes and Zulus. Even during the Zulu rebellion he sided with the British, though that so-called rebellion opened his eyes to the abuses of the British *regime*. Gandhiji's work for Indians in South Africa would have been trebled in its results and consequences had he been able to stabilise a relationship of friendliness and fraternity between the Indians and the Africans. This one failure has frustrated the magnificence of his achievements and made the Pegging Act possible.

## *C H A P T E R V*

### RETURN TO INDIA

WHEN the first World War broke out in 1914, it found Gandhi in England where he had gone with his wife to meet Gokhale. The meeting did not take place as he found that Gokhale had gone to Paris and the outbreak of the war had interfered with his return. While in England Gandhi convened a meeting of Indians there and exhorted them to enlist and help Britain in the war. He still had a few illusions regarding the Empire, and had not become convinced that India's future lay in complete independence. He said then what he has repeated many a time at the start of the present war that one must not take advantage of Britain's misfortune to bargain with her. Then as now he has his critics—those pure nationalists to whom the independence of India is greater than all other equations. Young spirits of those times craved to demand independence but Gandhi's moderation won the day and he wrote to Lord Crewe offering the services of Indians for ambulance work. After much hesitation the offer was accepted, but Gandhi had to return to India owing to an attack of pleurisy.

The Phoenix party had already arrived from South Africa, and C. F. Andrews had accommodated them at Santiniketan. For a time they had been the guests of Swami Shraddhananda in Gurukul, Kangri, and then moved to Santiniketan. At both places they were warmly welcomed, and they on their part made themselves fit in with their surroundings. Thus Gandhiji's first thought was for them and for a permanent home for them. On landing in India he went straight away to Poona to visit Gokhale, who was most anxious that he should join the

Servants of India Society. The Society however was not ready to fully accept him as many of his views were contrary to their ideals. Gandhiji told Gokhale that he was absolutely willing to work for him and the Society without forcing them to accept him. Gokhale also made it clear to him that he could count on him and the Society for the expenses of the Phoenix party. Thus relieved financially Gandhi turned to look for somewhere to settle down. He wanted it to be in Gujarat, since he felt that he could best serve his country through his own province. His friends also wanted him to settle there, and a place was found close to Ahmedabad—Sabarmati, which is to-day hallowed with his memory. Ahmedabad had traditions of fine handwork; though industrialisation was taking hold of the city Gandhi always motivated by the propagation of cottage industries felt that the proximity of the colony to Ahmedabad might enthuse the people to return to hand-work. The people of the province were delighted to have him there and financial help poured in which was a relief since after the death of Gokhale Gandhi could no longer count on financial help from the Servants of India Society. He had of course warned all his benefactors that the *Ashram* was open to untouchables, and for the time being nobody appeared to be perturbed by this thought. But when actually an untouchable family took shelter in the colony, their whole attitude changed, and Gandhi was deprived of all financial help. There was a general whisper of boycott and ostracism, and even within the camp there was not complete harmony. But by dint of patience the atmosphere within the *ashram* was cleared up and the inmates became used to their untouchable comrades but the outside world did not forgive or forget so easily. Thus financially Gandhiji was at this stage faced with a difficult problem, in fact one evening he was informed that the coffers were quite empty and he decided to remove to that side of the city reserved for untouch-

ables, since living conditions would be cheaper there. But it was not to be. An unknown merchant came to his *ashram* the same evening and gave him Rs. 16,000 for the upkeep of the settlement. Thus for one year the situation was once more saved. So timely and so strangely did this help come that mystics would read the supernatural in this story. In our very rational age we call it a happy and opportune co-incidence. Whatever and however we label it, it was an example that true principles never fail and out of the worst storms a haven of refuge opens out for staunch sufferers. Gandhiji does compromise in his dealings with his fellowmen, much of it is out of deference to the motives of the other man—his adversary—but with the fundamentals of life and living he has been adamant and completely unmoved. He laid down certain laws to govern his life, and he has lived by them these 75 years.

This transition period between his South African experiences and his actual leadership in national affairs is very interesting, since in retrospect one notices the development of his political acumen. He came finally to the helm of affairs from 1920, and before that we find a certain metamorphosis whereby something was added to his mental stature. In South Africa we saw in Gandhi a man governed more by the moral issue of the situation and thus developing a religious sagacity fast approaching mysticism and that height of enlightenment after which all good and great men of India have sought and hankered. On his return to India the situation is totally different—the moral issue is there of course but added to it are the abuses and discredited promises of Imperialism. Thus we find in him a shrewd statesmanlike brain allied to the morality of a saint. He developed in those early days a faculty for reading a situation correctly, of gauging the strength and weaknesses of his enemy. This was followed by his finally realising that the British connection was

not for the good of India, and that Britain's empirical policy was for the subjugation of India not for her upliftment. Thus it was the Indian scene with all its complexities that exposed the rotten facade of Imperialism, and helped to dispel the illusion that the Empire was in itself a good thing, but the system and individuals might be rotten. This realisation made it all the easier for him to fight the enemy, though he was ever ready to stop and parley. How his tactics reacted on the people and the Government will be seen by the effects they produced. Gandhi shrouded in mysticism much of his actions that had shrewd commonsense and meaning behind them. This he did not do from a feeling of duplicity but because the moral force was equally strong within him, and from his point of view the explanations were absolutely correct even though the political reading might make him appear biased.

Gandhiji's first experience of an all-India agitation was on behalf of South African protégés—the abolition of indentured labour. Pandit Malaviya asked leave of the Viceroy to bring it up in the Imperial Legislative Council; but Lord Chelmsford refused to allow it. Gandhiji toured the whole country recruiting sympathy from all sides, and preparing to launch *satyagraha* if a direct appeal failed. His cause was taken up by the responsible and wealthy citizens of the leading towns. Meetings were held to protest against the Viceroy's action as well as against the principle of indentured labour, and the country in general found voice. He also met the Viceroy and put his proposals before him, who as usual put him off with indefinite and vague promises. What Viceroys did in 1916, twenty-eight years later they still do—their tactics have neither changed nor progressed. But the weight of public agitation made itself felt, and for the first time achieved concrete results—it was announced before the actual zero hour—May 31st mentioned in Gandhiji's ultimatum for

starting *satyagraha*—that indentured emigration was stopped from India.

His next commission was the Champaran affair. The indigo plantations had been a byword for rapacity and cruelty, and it was said that nothing could wash out the indigo stain from the bosom of India. These planters were like kings in their domains and brooked no interference from anybody. The peasants were bowed down by the weight of their master's greed. They were the bondslaves of these people. Many are the stories that exist even to this day of the wickedness and immorality of indigo planters, and Champaran was the absolute nucleus of it all.

It existed also in Bengal, but it was Bihar that had to bear the brunt of it. Champaran was like a forgotten piece of the province of Bihar, tucked away close to Nepal at the foot of the Himalayas, so that the rest of India only knew vaguely about the misfortunes of the peasants there. Gandhiji's handling of the Champaran affair may be described as the first time when the cause of the peasants was espoused by one of the *bourgeois*. It was the first of all the agrarian revolts that were to result in the building up of the *kisan movement*. It for the first time made the agriculturist articulate. In retrospect the Champaran affair has greater significance than was allotted to it at that period, even then it caused a sensation whereby people began to be aware of the distress of the agricultural masses, because Gandhi pitted his strength against the hitherto all-powerful indigo planters and won on the rights of the case.

It was at the Lucknow Congress in 1916 that it was first brought to Gandhi's notice that his services were required for Champaran, where the tenant was bound by law to plant three-twentieth of every acre (almost one-seventh) of his land with indigo. Rajkumar Shukla, one of the peasants who suffered under this system, came to

him and begged his help. It was some months before the importunity of Rajkumar Shukla was answered, and early in 1917 Gandhi left Calcutta for Patna *en route* to Champaran, accompanied by the ubiquitous Rajkumar. The Champaran affair brought into Gandhiji's life some of his sincerest followers and colleagues who have since then been associated with him in all his endeavours—among these were Acharya Kirpalani who had in 1917 resigned his post at the Government College at Muzaffarpore, and was Gandhiji's host there *en route* to the indigo plantations; Rajendra Prasad, a lawyer of Patna, who has remained an ardent Congress worker since the far off days of 1917; and Vraja Kishore Prasad, also a lawyer, who championed the cause of the peasants then and became one of Gandhiji's most trusted colleagues. The labour of those days, apart from its satisfactory conclusion, produced this harvest of friends who have enriched Gandhiji's life by their unfailing devotion and trust.

With utmost fairness Gandhi set about to find the real truth regarding the indigo plantations, the planters and the peasants. Therefore he first saw the secretary of the Planters' Association who plainly told him that he was an outsider and should not interfere. From the official side his reception was no better, in fact the Commissioner threatened him if he did not leave Champaran immediately. Gandhiji had of course no intention of doing so, but at the very outset, even before he had started any investigations, he was arrested on his way to Motihari. The people were enraged at this injustice, but with the help of Vraja Kishore, Rajendra Prasad and others they were quietened, while the prisoner pleaded guilty and gave in unequivocal terms his reasons for disobeying the order asking him to quit Champaran. Before however the trial could take place an order for his release arrived from Patna at the instance of the Lieut. Governor, and he was assured of official help in the pursuit of his en-

quiries. This step pleased neither the officials nor the planters, it greatly angered the latter. They did not hesitate to resort to poisonous propaganda against Gandhi, even mischievously inciting ignorant and illiterate peasants to robbery and bloodshed saying that it was Gandhi's wish. But Gandhiji proceeded fearlessly on his enquiry, being helped financially and concretely from all sides. Peasants flocked into Motihari, which he had made his headquarters, and gave their statements voluntarily, feeling for the first time the thrill of having someone to espouse their cause. They felt that no longer were they friendless. Gandhi proceeded as tactfully as he could, not seeking over-publicity, in fact avoiding it, so as not to incense and alienate the officials. Among his researches he found out that a labourer in an indigo plantation did not earn daily more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  annas, a woman one and a half annas, and a child three pice. Usually the peasant children worked on the plantation to secure these three coppers a day. They were ignorant, illiterate and living under insanitary and unhealthy conditions. Gandhiji opened primary schools in six villages, and all that was incumbent on the villagers was to find board and lodging for the teachers. Among those who came as voluntary teachers were Kasturba herself, Devdas his youngest son and Mahadev Desai who was later on to become his general factotum and give his life in his service. Medical relief was obtained through the Servants of India Society, and the work of general cleaning up, healing and teaching progressed satisfactorily while the enquiries proceeded and more and more statements were recorded. It was now about one year and a half since Gandhiji had applied himself to the Champaran affair, and the Government was growing restive at the time his enquiries were taking. He sent them the correct reply that his work would be terminated if only the Government were prepared to accept the grievances of the peasants and redress them. The up-

shot of it was that a Commission was appointed by the Bihar Government to conduct an official enquiry and Gandhi was invited to take a seat in it as the spokesman of the peasants. He did so on the strict understanding that he should be allowed to consult with his colleagues whenever occasion arose. Gandhiji in his autobiography pays great tribute to the part played by Sir Edward Gait, the then Lieut. Governor, in securing an unanimous report by the Commission which resulted in the passing of the Agrarian Bill in the face of powerful opposition by the planters. This Bill once and for all killed the planters' régime in Champaran and abolished the system of compulsory plantation of indigo on three-twentieths of every acre. The peasants for the first time tasted reform and relief. Gandhiji's mission was successfully completed—the Champaran affair was over.

Even before his work in Bihar was completed Gandhiji received a call from his own province of Gujerat—from Khaira where there was acute agrarian distress. Anxious as he was to pursue the social welfare he had started in the villages of Champaran he felt that he must go back and see how he could help in Khaira, where the crops had failed yielding less than 25 per cent of the normal produce, yet there had been no relief for the peasantry from assessments. The Land Revenue Rules specified that there would be an exemption from assessment should the crops yield less than 25 per cent—but who was to determine whether it was less or more? The peasants maintained it was less, the Government petty officials said that it was more. This state of affairs is inevitable where the Government exists to exploit the people, and Gandhiji threw in his lot with the peasantry to organise them in order to make them articulate. During this period many of the stalwarts who were later to figure in the Congress struggles came into Gandhiji's life and remained his firm supporters throughout—Vithaldas and Vallabhai Patel,

Shankerlal Banker, Indulal Yajnik, Anasuya Ben and of course again Mahadev Desai was by his side. Vallabhai Patel gave up a lucrative practice at the Bar to throw in his lot with Gandhiji.

Gandhi advised the farmers to resort to *satyagraha* only when repeated letters and appeals to the Government failed to produce any effect. A pledge was signed by the volunteers, the farmers refusing to pay any more taxes, until the second assessment had been rescinded. Should this come to pass the ones who were better off were willing to pay their dues even with back effect provided the poorer ones were relieved. This campaign served in a large measure to unify the people, and make them realise the common bonds between them. Therefore though the *satyagraha* was called off on Government's acquiescing to these demands, the achievement was also important from the point of view that people were beginning to team up together irrespective of their positions. Gandhi had placed a new ideal and incentive before the people, which served to rouse patriotism and fellow feeling.

Since his return to India Gandhiji had been anxiously acquainting himself with the progressive Muslims of the day—he had already made the acquaintance of the Ali Brothers and Maulana Md. Ali continued to write to him throughout the latter's imprisonment. Of Hakim Ajmal Khan he had heard a great deal from Andrews, and knew him as a person working for the common good of Hindus and Muslims, and from that day his desire for Hindu-Muslim unity became paramount and significant of the struggle for freedom in India. Throughout all these years he has striven for it in spite of the intrigues of the British Government to foment strife between the two communities, and the failure of both Hindus and Muslims to see through this. If he has failed it is probably because of his inability to realise the value of mass contacts, which has put the Muslim League in the position that it occupies to-day.

Hitherto Gandhiji had not failed to emphasise that the two communities must be united for the greater good of an independent India, and he has not changed that idea, he has only modified it as independence first and then unity will follow as a matter of course against the British Government's declaration to achieve unity now, then independence. Gandhiji is correct that communalism is an extraneous matter to be settled by the people of a free India, but perhaps it is necessary to circumvent the mischievous propaganda of Imperialism in classifying him and the Congress as primarily Hindu and for Hindu interests by creating a common front with the League even by conceding certain points to them. When the time comes these matters will not be arbitrarily settled by either the Congress or the League but by a national government of the free peoples of India.

In his desire for drawing Muslims into the national struggle it was inevitable that he should be drawn into the Khilafat Movement. Therefore when he was asked to join the War Conference at Delhi, he naturally raised objections at the exclusion of leaders such as Tilak and the Ali Brothers; also Andrews informed him of certain rumours regarding predatory treaties between England and Italy. Gandhi went directly to the Viceroy with this piece of news, and the reply he received might have been made the other day in 1939-40 instead of twenty-seven years ago: "You may raise whatever moral issues you like and challenge us as much as you please after the conclusion of the war, not to-day." Even then Gandhi had not completely shed his belief in the British connection, and therefore taking the Viceroy's words at their face value he joined the Conference, speaking there in Hindustani with the addition of this one English sentence: "With a full sense of my responsibility, I beg to support the resolution," in connection with fresh recruiting. This was the first time that anybody had dared to address a

meeting in the Viceregal presence in Hindustani—as such it was a victory—or perhaps a sop to Gandhi to enlist his support. And he was as good as his word. He went off in search of recruits—first of all to Khaira, the scene of his recent labours. Here he for the first time realised the utter indifference—in fact bitterness—of the Indian people towards the British Empire. Where in the case of *satyagraha* all help and facilities had been available, for recruitment it was with difficulty that he could obtain one cart for touring the area. But he was not the sort of person to give up, and his persistence had the worst possible effect on his health.

Insufficient and irregular diet created deficiencies which made him bedridden—he was suffering from grave intestinal troubles. While he was thus confined to bed he did not cease to worry regarding the recruiting he had undertaken—but Vallabhai Patel brought him the news of British victory and armistice which lightened his mental load. Treatment followed several lines, but with his "obstinacy" regarding food nothing could help him—he was gradually fading away, when the advent of a "crank" who applied ice treatment to his body did much to restore him to health and slowly he began to convalesce. Just as he was rising from what he believed was his death bed, another shock in the shape of the Rowlatt Bill came upon him. To-day when we are faced with all manner of arbitrary laws and ordinances, when Defence of India has come to mean anything those in power might consider it to be so, the Rowlatt Bill and the countrywide indignation it roused seems amazing. But the fact that during its life of three years it was never applied was the effect of public agitation. It was the match that was applied to the fuse of fermenting patriotic feelings. India was striving, her awakening was not far away. (The Rowlatt Bill framed by Indian constitutionalists (the late Sir P. C. Mitter attained much notoriety out of it) was passed to try

and combat revolutionary activities in Bengal, and involved such proceedings as imprisonment without trial. Shades of the Rowlatt Bill! India's leaders are to-day in jail without being tried. Like in *Alice in Wonderland* the British Government says "Sentence first, judgment afterwards!" To-day as in 1918. Twentysix years have made no difference whatsoever.

With the rising tide of national feeling, Gandhiji felt that something must be done to demonstrate the enormity of this arbitrary act. While India in general had been deeply moved over his 21 years labour for Indians in South Africa, to the people in general he had still appeared remote and unpolitical. The Champaran and Khaira affairs brought him nearer to the people, and he began to be looked up to as a spokesman of the hitherto dumb peasantry. But it was his founding of the *Satyagraha Sabha* at the time of the Rowlatt Bill that brought him openly before the public with the stamp of leadership. He fired the imagination of rising nationalism in India by this action. Gandhi was still confined to his bed, unable to summon up sufficient strength to take part in the movement he had initiated, yet impatient to do so. He even underwent a minor operation so as to be able to be on his feet, yet his feebleness was difficult to combat. The main reason was diet, since he refused to have beef tea or eggs or milk or soup, there was nothing to bring the strength back to his limbs. Finally, so anxious was he to begin the campaign that he compromised by promising to take goat's milk on the ground that he had given up taking cow's and buffalo's milk because he had heard of "*phooka*" or torturous practices on cattle to produce more milk, and since goats were not subjected to that, he would rescind his vow to that extent. He was not happy with this compromise because he was certain that milk was not an essential part of man's diet, but his craving to launch the struggle made him effect it.

This was also the period when Motilal Nehru was undergoing a metamorphosis, which was not long after to fling him from the Moderates' into the Extremists' camp. Jawaharlal's young imagination was also captured by Gandhiji's enrolment of *satyagraha* volunteers and their signing of pledges, and he too wanted to join, go to jail if necessary. The idea of his beloved son going to jail was too much for Motilal, and he severely forbade his son to take part in Gandhi's movement. Thereafter ensued days of distress for father and son, during which period Gandhi came to Allahabad to have talks with the older Nehru, at the latter's request. As an upshot of that Gandhi advised Jawaharlal to wait and not precipitate matters by joining the movement just then. But as it happened the entire proceedings were changed, and the affairs of India refusing control went into other unexpected channels.

Gandhi next visited Madras and for the first time met Rajagopalachariar, who had just settled down to legal practice in Madras. Under the impending shadow of the Rowlatt Bill were forged the strong links of friendship that were to bind these two personalities even in the midst of differences. With him Gandhi discussed the details of *satyagraha* and civil disobedience—what to do and why? Gandhiji was disturbed in his mind as to how to prosecute this civil disobedience—a correct line in this direction was to come later. (The field of politics was still comparatively unploughed, and the furrow had to be strengthened before the seeds could be sown.) As an inspiration came to Gandhiji the idea of a *hartal*—something that was later to become a household word in India. It meant the closing of all shops and places of business as a sign of mourning. The suggestion carried, and at his instance *hartal* was proclaimed throughout India on March 30th, and then changed to April 6th. There was little time for propaganda but the word flew from village

to village, from city to town until a most successful *hartal* was organised throughout India. It was a grand demonstration of the rising public feeling, and frightened imperialism so much that it had to have recourse to violence as an offset. This was also the beginning of Gandhiji's leadership, and for the first time he appeared at the helm of all-India affairs—a position which he has held up till now for a period of over 25 years, except for a brief interlude when his influence momentarily was removed from the Congress and he took up Harijan work. It was still personal leadership, so far the Congress had not associated itself with it vitally but that too was not afar off. A feeling of liberation filled the people of India and they held up their heads proudly ready to fight and if necessary die for their freedom. Exhilaration swept through the country.

But tragic happenings marred the joy of that day. At Delhi, the *hartal* was perfect, and a fresh Hindu-Muslim bond was being cemented under the leadership of Hakim Ajmal Khan and Swami Sraddhananda. The latter was asked to speak at the Jumma Musjid, an unprecedented honour for a Hindu. The same Swami Sraddhananda was later to be stabbed by a Muslim, at the instigation of the Imperialists for whom such fraternal feelings between Hindus and Muslims was dangerous to the extreme.

But that was much later—this day, March 30th, on which Delhi kept the *hartal*, the authorities unable to bear the significance of this Hindu-Muslim unity, stopped the procession going towards the railway station and fired at the crowd. The incensed mob retaliated with sticks and brickbats but were mown down by gun fire. The same thing was repeated in Lahore, where the prominent citizens of the city had to crawl on their bellies along the most important thoroughfares to expiate their fellow citizens' sins of rioting. A fortnight later was the Amritsar massacre

at Jallianwallahbagh. The story of how General Dyer mowed down with gun fire a crowd of people gathered together within a small space without means of exit is too well-known to bear repetition. Suffice it to say that it was one of the most inhuman killings of innocent individuals the world has ever witnessed for which Britain feted General Dyer as a hero, and condoned Michael O'Dwyer's inefficient and criminal Governorship of the Punjab. This province, which has for a century supplied more men into the British Army, was in those days of April-May, 1919, shrouded in grief and misfortune. It was a living hell for the people living under martial law without any aid being allowed to come in from outside. The indignities and cruelties heaped upon the Punjab left her bleeding and torn, and the rest of India stood aghast that a civilised government could do such things. A blanket fell upon all news and no help from the rest of India was allowed into the province for six months. Gandhiji was banned from entry and not until October 17th was the ban lifted, which resulted in the establishment of two enquiry committees—the Hunter Committee and the Congress enquiry committee under the leadership of C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, in consultation with Gandhiji.

Labour troubles and strikes also broke out in Ahmedabad and other industrial centres; it seemed as if Gandhiji had at last stirred up the proletariat to life. Unfortunately the national leadership was bourgeois, and as such the rising of the masses would be decidedly prejudicial to the capitalists and landholders who were helping Gandhi in his national struggle. Therefore on the plea of absolute non-violence he called off the *satyagraha* and the strikes. The last thing he wanted at that juncture was to handle a mass uprising, which might have been successful in wresting independence for India, or it might not. My personal view is that an unarmed mob could have done little against the guns of the British Government, while

civil disobedience is more effective in striking against the root of exploitation. Yet the general feeling is that Gandhiji, the only leader with mass support at that period, could have utilised the spirit of revolt into a genuine and powerful movement, but one feels that he was anxious to confine the struggle to the bourgeois elements without giving much chance for the development of a proletarian movement. His background, his education and his support was entirely bourgeois, yet he has that wonderful faculty which makes him a mass leader without his wishing to utilise the masses in the struggle for Indian freedom.

## C H A P T E R V I

### NON-VIOLENCE AND NON-CO-OPERATION

(JAWAHARLAL NEHRU in describing Gandhiji's ideals has said that "non-violence has been, and is, the sheet anchor of his policy," and I can find nothing more apt by which to sum up his attitude. He has been always actuated by two facts in which he firmly believes—(a) that ends do not justify the means; (b) that moral force is far stronger than physical power.) The correctness of the latter is indisputable, provided the moral force is sufficiently developed to create and stiffen morale which is not common or usual among the general run of people. Therefore however reliable the General, the soldiers are not always of the same calibre to ensure that the moral force will be properly directed and hurled in all its strength. The first point is debatable. According to Gandhi the priority and achievement of the ends are ruined if the means are doubtful. If we weigh it from that point of view the Russian revolution stands condemned in spite of its wonderful achievements later on. Why then do not

the ends justify the means? Gandhi maintains that they do not, if one sows violence one cannot be expected to reap peace. It is the doctrine of Christ which he has modified, and while "turning the cheek" he also resists the evil which is being inflicted upon him by the force of his moral courage. Gandhi's doctrine is passive outwardly but active inwardly. He has himself written: "Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant." As a way of living its conceptions are great, of the greatest, but at the moment we are interested in its practical application to politics from 1921 to present times in India. The Congress as a whole never accepted the doctrine of non-violence as a permanent religion or creed; even Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography admits that "it would only be a policy and a method promising certain results, and by those results it would have to be finally judged."

The Amritsar Congress of December 1919, held directly after the Jallianwallahbagh affair, was the turning point in the internal affairs of the Congress. So far all that Gandhiji had done had been at his own instance but from this time a new spirit, and a more uncompromising spirit, began to make itself felt and his influence came into the horizon of Indian politics, dominating even such tremendous personalities as Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das and the Ali Brothers, who for the first time joined the Congress in 1919. Gandhi's attitude was and has been a spiritual and religious approach even in politics and it is strange that so often he compelled the acquiescence to his schemes of such hard-headed lawyers as C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, who were supremely rational. They resisted him and contended against him and invariably it was Gandhiji who won them over. There has been much talk lately

as to whether his influence has been a good thing in Indian politics or not. To my mind there can be no two opinions regarding this—Gandhiji's leadership gave to Congress the primary position it occupies to-day in the lives of the Indian people. It was his initiative that created a revolutionary political organisation out of what had been a debating society speaking in flowery language. By achieving this orientation he gave an identity to the people of India, brought them out of serfdom to realise their moral rights and the initial right of freedom. To-day many of us may differ from Gandhiji's approaches to national problems, that was also not wanting in the first days of his coming to the helm of affairs, but more to-day than then we cannot dispute the fact that but for him world attention would not have been drawn to India. Ultimately whether we take the Gandhian way or not is still to be seen, but India's fight for liberty gathered its momentum from his initiative and leadership. The fact that he has restored to India her feeling of self-respect and national pride is no mean achievement. Whether other spirits would have risen if Gandhi had not appeared is a matter for conjecture; but the fact remains that India has gained in stature by association with him. From this point of view and perspective must be judged the non-co-operation movements which he initiated and led in the twenties and thirties of this century, and which were the most exhilarating years that Indian nationalism has ever known. A feeling of liberation, of activity, filled the old and young and they went forward to fill the jails and sacrifice of their best with a smile on their lips. It was Gandhi who inspired them.

The Khilafat Committee was most impressed by Gandhiji's concrete plans of action and in particular his theories of non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity attracted them to his leadership. Consequently the Khilafat Conference was convened at which he was invited to express

his opinions and ideas. Among the signatories to this invitation were Hakim Ajmal Khan and Asaf Ali, while Swami Shraddhananda was one of the invitees. It is interesting to remember that the Khilafat Committee counted upon the major support of the Muslim bourgeoisie, while the Muslim League was a very minor body of communal minded people. No bid was made to capture the masses nor were they reckoned as having any voice at all. To-day the Muslim intellectuals and progressive minded politicians still maintain their loyalty and allegiance to the Congress, upholding the traditions of 1920 under the ægis of the Majlis-i-Ahrar and other progressive institutions; but the Muslim League exploiting the ignorance of the masses for communal and personal policies has established a firm base among the general populace.

At this conference held in Delhi in 1919, Gandhi put before it the plan of boycotting foreign goods as a part of *satyagraha* for the righting of Punjab and Khilafat wrongs) But the more militant spirits demanded something more than mere boycott of foreign clothes—why not raise the slogan of “boycott British goods”, they said, or some other more vital programme of action. (It was at this stage that Gandhi coined the word “non-co-operation” by which he said that if one really wanted to do something concrete, the best they would be to stop co-operating with the British Government in vital matters?) This proposal carried the conference, and later at the Special Congress convened at Calcutta in September 1920. It was the first Gandhi Congress, in this that the delegates were of a different type not from the top strata of anglicised Indians but from the lower middle classes dressed in their national costumes. Hindusthani was used in a larger measure than English and the general atmosphere was one of seething unrest and desire for action. Thus the proposal of “non-co-operation” put before it was carried with enthusiasm

with one marked change that it extended the aims from merely the righting of Punjab and Khilafat wrongs to the attainment of *Swaraj* or self-government. Thus the character of the entire Congress was changed from that of its advisory capacity to one of real political ideals. It is significant that among the many who left the Congress after its re-orientation was Md. Ali Jinnah, who was later to create great rifts between Hindus and Muslims and thus remain the friend of bureaucracy.

From this stage the Congress took upon itself the leadership of mass struggles for the freedom of India but on a non-violent basis. This in itself was a clever move, apart from Gandhiji's real belief in it, to enable an unarmed people to strike and strike effectively. The movement gave the fillip to nationalism which it needed, and it embraced a programme of boycotting the newly introduced Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, renunciation of titles bestowed by Government and call to lawyers to leave the law courts, to students to come out of schools and colleges, revival of hand spinning and weaving—initiation of *khadi* into the lives of the people—and non-payment of taxes. These proposals were ratified at the annual Congress held at Nagpur in December 1920, while the November of that year saw the complete and successful boycott of the legislatures—two-thirds of the voters absenting themselves from the elections. Jawaharlal Nehru in his autobiography records Sir Valentine Chirol's impressions as: "Sir Valentine Chirol happened to be in Allahabad on the election day, and he made a round of the polling booths. He returned amazed at the efficiency of the boycott... At one rural polling station, about fifteen miles from Allahabad city, he found that not a single voter had appeared. He gives an account of his experiences in one of his books on India." The lawyers' boycott had in it the astounding examples of C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, both leading lawyers and earning fantastic sums. Overnight they

gave up everything to join the non-co-operators. But apart from them very few people gave up their practices. The students responded whole-heartedly and colleges and schools were boycotted. The movement had another great effect—it brought women out of *purdah* and threw upon their shoulders national responsibilities. It was *khadi* which effected this.

The spinning wheel has come to be symbolic of India, and found a place in the national flag. Gandhiji though not knowing the actual possibilities of *khadi* during his South African days had always visualised spinning among other cottage industries for moral reconstruction and upliftment. But it was during the actual days of preparing for the boycott of foreign goods that he conceived of spinning and weaving as effective aids. This was made clearer by his conversation with industrialists who assured him that the boycott of foreign cloth would send up the price of mill cloth as there were not enough mills to provide India's 300 millions. Therefore Gandhiji instituted spinning as an essential in the non-co-operation movement, and so great was the enthusiasm that in every home in city and village the spinning wheel began to hum, and from that day it became the symbol of India's independence and *khadi* attained a dignity which all the silks and satins of the emperors could not achieve. It was spinning that brought women into the national movement, it was something they could understand and contribute and it helped them to throw aside their *bourgeois* limitations and become drawn into the struggle by the side of their husbands and sons. A new era in the emancipation of women was achieved which all the franchise and voting power could not have done for them.

The movement continued to stride forward with all militancy, and more and more through it the political progress of the Congress was focussed. It was a grand experience for the people—the whole nation fighting together,

striving for freedom. The jails were filled to overflowing and by 1921 more than 30,000 people were in prison. Imperialism looked askance at this demonstration of national militancy. But the movement went also into other channels that showed the rise of mass feeling and unrest which caused the Government anxious moments and violent repression. Notable among these were the Moplah rebellion in South India, the Midnapore no-tax campaign, the Akali movement in the Punjab and the Assam-Bengal railway strikes. Government was truly alarmed and thought of a way of placating the country by bringing out royal visitors—the Duke of Connaught and the Prince of Wales, both of whom were severely and completely boycotted, so high was the morale of the people. It must be admitted that Government's repression and anger caused many a fracas between them and the people which were certainly not non-violent. These encounters upset Gandhiji, and he began to wonder about the efficacy of the non-co-operation movement. It was far from his ideas to stir up mass movements that would go beyond his control. By this time both the Nehrus, C. R. Das and other leaders had been imprisoned. But exhilarated by the movement they took their imprisonments as the necessary prelude to *Swaraj*.

At this stage the National Volunteer movement began to take shape, still on the basis of non-violent non-co-operation, therefore without arms or batons, nevertheless they were well drilled, well-disciplined and some of them wore uniforms. They organised *hartals* and the picketing of cloth and liquor shops by peaceful means. But Government saw fit to declare the National Volunteers illegal, and this was followed by mass arrests. There was wild enthusiasm all over the country and hundreds of students and workers joined the Volunteers. The Viceroy sought to stem the tide of the movement by trying to negotiate with the leaders in prison, offering to release all prisoners

and legalise the Volunteers, provided civil disobedience was called off. The negotiations fell through. In the midst of this fever heat of enthusiasm the Congress sessions were held at Ahmedabad, where there was unanimous resolve to carry on the fight till *Swaraj* was established, calling upon all to participate in the movement in whatever capacity possible and full powers were vested in Mahatma Gandhi to continue the fight as sole executive of the Congress. The country waited for the final struggle, for the launching of mass civil disobedience. There was a general unrest among the peasantry; eager to start a no-rent campaign. The Ahmedabad Congress was held in December 1921; Gandhi waited on the peak of the movement without calling for action for one month. Then in February he hastily summoned the Working Committee at Bardoli and decided to call off the civil disobedience movement, on the grounds that violence was rampant and the spirit of non-violent non-co-operation had been betrayed at the village of Chauri Chaura where the peasants had burned down the police station and taken reprisals on the officers for repressions upon them. The whole country was stupefied, the leaders raged from their prisons and bureaucracy breathed a sigh of relief. The Bardoli resolution threw some light on Gandhiji's policy of protection for the landlords, since non-payment of taxes could have been as peaceful and non-violent as anything else, but the Working Committee urged upon the peasantry not to withhold rents and taxes from their landlords and *zemindars*. The result of this was a general demoralisation and a feeling of frustration crept in upon the people. Gandhi was arrested on May 10th and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. He was however subsequently released after two years.

The general after-effects of the abortive civil disobedience were many, and the most poisonous was the start of communal differences. The Muslim League which had

in 1916 achieved unity with the Congress broke away and flourished under Government patronage; the Hindu Mahasabha began to gradually function on the plea of safeguarding Hindu interests. C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru being dissatisfied with Gandhi's policy of spinning, boycott of foreign goods and removal of untouchability, craved for other fields in which to fight for India's independence. A new party was founded by them called the Swaraj Party which advocated taking part in the legislatures and carrying the fight into that sphere. The strict Gandhites would have none of this, but the Swaraj Party carried the majority in the Congress in their decision and for the time being Gandhiji retired into the background with his constructive social ideals away from political wrangles. The Swaraj Party was a good thing in this that it meant activity but it was dependent for its existence upon the upper class *bourgeoisie*, the leaders themselves being of them, and thus completely lost touch with the masses. In the meantime the mass movement was developing on its own—between 1920 and 1930 saw the birth of trade unions, especially the militant Girni Kamgar Union representing the cotton workers of Bombay and the Workers' and Peasants' Party. Within the Congress too Socialist elements were making themselves felt and this resulted in the passing, at the Madras Congress in 1927, of a resolution declaring complete independence as the goal of the national movement.

Seven years after he had relinquished his leadership Gandhi was recalled to take it up again at the Calcutta Congress held in December 1928. It was clear to these elements who wished to preserve India from a revolution yet achieve self-government that Gandhi was the only leader who had mass prestige. It was only he who could control and direct the masses in a way that would not wipe out completely the present order of things; only he was politician enough to tackle the existing situation with

bureaucracy and the masses. There was no doubt at this stage that in spite of a developing working class and peasant movement, Gandhi stood out head and shoulders above his colleagues, enjoying a power and influence which none of them could claim. He was the spokesman of the *bourgeoisie* but he was acceptable to the masses, and in spite of his moral and spiritual approaches or perhaps because of them, he was more understood and trusted than anybody else. Thus after a lapse of years he found himself once more at the helm of affairs. His first task was to get the Nehru Report (a draft constitution based on responsible government *within* the Empire—thus shifting the question of complete independence temporarily) accepted by the Congress, and then giving an ultimatum to the British Government of its acceptance by December 1929 or the start of civil disobedience on a larger scale than before. The one year of respite given to bureaucracy was enough for their plans and organisation of repression. The principal working class leaders were put in prison and tried for conspiracy, thus leaving the initiation entirely in the hands of Gandhi and his colleagues and counteracting the danger of any serious mass revolt.

January 1st, 1930, dawned exciting and unforgettable—the national flag of India was unfurled for the first time, and the independence pledge was taken *en masse* all over the country on January 26th, which has remained memorable these fourteen years, for men have solemnly celebrated it ever since. The pledge has remained the goal of Indian aspirations; its momentous and militant words declaring the “unalienable right of the Indian people to have freedom” have yet the same power of lighting the spark of revolution as France’s once proud, now tattered, motto of “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité”. That pledge seems to typify and consolidate all that India and her leaders have been fighting for, all that her masses are still striving for. It is the beacon which was lit on January

26th, 1930, and which has been tended by the blood and tears of our martyrs. By the words "We recognise however that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence" the country pledged itself to the doctrine of Gandhi. The nation awaited the leader's—Gandhiji's—word for the start of the movement. Complete independence was the iron determination of the leaders as of the people. A wave of enthusiasm and revolutionary feeling swept over the people until they were prepared to sacrifice anything for the sake of their freedom.

This non-co-operation movement lasted from 1930 to 1934, the last two years more or less desultory, while during the first twelve months it gathered a momentum which bureaucracy would have found difficult to control had there been a less uncompromising leader than Gandhi at the top of affairs. The answer to Gandhi's appeal for non-co-operation was a great tribute to the power and influence wielded by him, as well as fulfilling a psychological necessity of the moment. The very metaphysical qualities of him which rational leaders deplored made his way easier into the hearts of the masses, while his undoubted personality and reason ensured him the co-operation of people like Motilal Nehru. His way of living also brought him nearer the people than any leader hitherto. It is necessary to fully realise that the people of India gave him their confidence completely and it is also vital for the British to realise that he, whom to-day they call their enemy, had within his power to unleash a tremendous revolutionary force upon India during the years 1930-34, and in fact any time that he desired to do so. The fact that he has spared them, and in the eyes of many played fast and loose with the national movement by trying compromises, is because he had his hand on the pulse of the people and could guide them as he thought fit. This created a terrible feeling of dependancy on him, and

none of the leaders were anything but his lieutenants. Even in the years that followed when he was supposed to be out of Congress affairs, it was his personality that overshadowed all others.

Before starting a movement, time and again he has offered to compromise with bureaucracy—this has been his unfailing custom. He has warned, he has made offers of mediation but not often has bureaucracy cared to listen to this most reasonable of revolutionaries. Consistent with his previous actions, in 1930 also he issued an offer to the Government on certain points before starting civil disobedience—these included the rupee ratio of 1 sh. 4d., total prohibition, reduction of land revenues and military expenditure, and abolition of the protective tariff on foreign cloth. The Government however took no notice of the declaration and therefore on April 6th began the famous march to Dandi. The breaking of the laws giving Government the monopoly of salt-making was his first step, and followed by a chosen few, he went to this seashore village and set up his pans for salt making. His action captured the imagination of the world, and the people of India were hysterical with enthusiasm. His lone figure and lone action stood out as the first blow against Imperialism, and was followed by mass upsurge throughout the country resulting in undreamt of consequences since the official instructions issued by the Congress leadership were only boycott of foreign cloth, breaking the salt laws, and picketting of liquor shops. Instead a violent struggle also took shape in the Chittagong armoury raids and happenings in Peshawar. The latter resulted in a company of Garhwali soldiers refusing to fire on the mob and fraternising with them. An intensive no-rent campaign also started. Thus once more the movement refused to function along set channels and burst the bonds set upon it. On the 5th of May Gandhiji was arrested, by June the Congress and all its affiliated organisations were

declared illegal while inhuman repression followed. As many as 90,000 people were jailed all over India. But the tempo of the movement was in the ascendancy.

Exactly one year after the first Independence Day—on January 26th, 1931—Gandhiji and the Congress Working Committee members were released, and on March 4th the Gandhi-Irwin agreement was made. The very fact that the all-powerful British Raj had had to sign a pact with the leader of the Indian people was in itself a triumph for the Indian people, and swept through the country in an exhilarating wave. But it was a heavy price to pay since this agreement conceded no demands of the Congress, and civil disobedience was called off temporarily until after the Round Table Conference, leaving only the peaceful boycott of foreign cloth as the plan of campaign and agreeing to the release of "non-violent" prisoners only. Thus Gandhiji's action endorsed at the Karachi Congress called off the civil disobedience once more at the peak of its success. There was general confusion and bewilderment; while most people gave in to the discipline which leadership demands, yet a tragic sense of frustration once more crept in among the people, and sporadic acts of resistance and violence continued.

In 1931 Gandhiji left for the Round Table Conference as the sole accredited leader of the Indian people—a lone figure surrounded by the satellites and henchmen of British Imperialism. The conference was a farcical affair that was intended to concentrate on unimportant details and issues, clouding the real one of independence. Strongly against separate electorates as he was Gandhiji gave in to them so as to secure the unity of the other representatives on the more important issues which were hardly discussed. The Conference ended by foisting the Government of India Act of 1935, the so-called New Constitution, upon the people of India which in practice to-

day seems almost as unprogressive and bureaucratic as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

During his stay in England Gandhiji lived at Kingsley Hall, where Miss Muriel Lester was his hostess, and where many important and unimportant people came to visit the illustrious visitor from India. Gandhiji's life varied little in this totally different climate—his prayers at early morning and evening, his long walks before dawn and his diet of fruit and goat's milk were unchanged. His clothing had only the additional weight of a light blanket over his shoulders. The poor and the genuine people of Britain, whom he loves, came to see him and this visit of his, his gentle smile and want of ceremony has remained for ever in their hearts. Even now there are many who speak of him, and the room he occupied is always remembered as sacred to his memory. To them he was and is a friend, whatever Imperialism might want to class him as. Many of the prominent people sought his acquaintance and there were many whom he went to see and confer with, but there was one exception—Mr. Winston Churchill, Britain's aristocratic present Premier, to whom Gandhiji was nothing more than a "half-naked fakir" and whom he would not see until he was properly clothed. Characteristic of Gandhiji's dignity and greatness, such pettinesses failed even to disturb his composure, but the people of India felt as if a red hot iron had been thrust into their hearts. Gandhiji had gone to serve the people—it mattered little to him who saw him and who did not, but Churchill by his implied sneer succeeded in forcing national humiliation upon the people of India.

There had been no sincerity or real feeling of compromise on the part of bureaucracy in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact; it was only a stunt to play for time. So when Gandhi returned from England he was met with even worse repression than the country had known. The well-known leaders were all in prison and ordinances were the

order of the day from Peshawar to Bengal. It was a terrible state of affairs, and the only terms this time given to the Congress was unconditional surrender. Once more the Congress was declared illegal, its papers, premises and funds seized. During the years 1932-33 there was frightful repression throughout the country, but the people were prepared to sacrifice so much that it was 29 weeks before they could be beaten into surrender where bureaucracy had anticipated a speedy victory. Gandhiji and the Congress President were both arrested, and within the first 4 months of 1932 there were more than 80,000 prisoners in the jails. Civil liberty ceased to exist and Samuel Hoare said proudly that the ordinances "covered almost every activity of Indian life" and that this was a fight to the finish. It was a definite set-back for the national movement since it was now on the defensive, whereas in 1930-31 the offensive had lain with it; and also because of the confiscation of cars, property and incomes by the Government a large number of the *bourgeois* adherents of the Congress became white livered and dropped out of it—at least until it had been restored to more palmy days. During this period while those who had the confidence of the Indian people lay in jails, a constitution for India was drawn up in far Whitehall by Imperialism and her lackeys.

Gandhiji was released following his fast unto death, for better representation for the depressed classes under the new constitution. This resulted in the Poona Pact whereby the number of seats allotted to the depressed classes was doubled on his recommendations to Ramsay Macdonald. Thereafter he devoted himself for some years to the removal of untouchability. The great movement which he had initiated was reduced to individual and selected *satyagraha* from mass action in July 1933, and in May of the following year the members of the Working Committee were allowed to meet at Patna and they called off civil disobedience completely. At that

stage nothing else could be done, since even Gandhi with all his popularity could not switch off and switch on a mass movement. He had been gradually regulating and lowering its tempo until it became more dignified to end it before it petered out of itself. Nothing of all that it had set out to achieve was secured, but it had the effect of creating a real nation out of India, cementing unity and giving an incentive to the people. As such its gains in revolutionary potentialities was substantial.

Gandhiji at this stage passed on to the untouchable problem, from political revolution he turned to social revolution since his championship of the outcast and untouchable was a dagger at the heart of orthodoxy. This revivalist mission of his has had its political repercussions, in this that it has given identity to those really dumb and depressed ones and brought them into line with the national movement. His dual rôle in Indian life of reformer and political leader has added to his influence—what British Imperialism classes as dictatorship. If dictatorship it be—it is unique in being a dictatorship inspired by love, tolerance and non-violence.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE HARIJANS

GANDHIJI'S approach to this problem was weighed by the consideration of what are the minimum rights of man. He is in a direct line of descent from the other reformers before him starting with Buddha, all of whom have been agitated over this question of the untouchables which Tagore has aptly put thus: "My unfortunate country! It is right that we as a nation should taste of the humiliation which we have inflicted upon our oppressed brethren..

Our only salvation lies in drawing into our midst them whom we have so far pushed away into the outer wilderness." Gandhi has put it in less poetic but equally strong terms as: "The Hindus have considered themselves *Aryas* or civilised and a section of their own kith and kin as *Anaryas* or untouchables, with the result that a strange if unjust nemesis is being visited not only upon the Hindus in South Africa but also upon the Mussalmans and Parsis as well, inasmuch as they belong to the same country and have the same colour as their Hindu brethren." Even though all reformers through the ages have tried to bring about some relief to the depressed classes, it has been Gandhi who has to some extent been able to accomplish the recognition of their rights. This task has been one of his greatest contributions to India, and history will remember him as the friend of the "pariah"—a distinction which none of the great spirits before him can claim.

"Achhut" or untouchable is the name given not to one class of people but a number of depressed classes that hang on to the outer fringe of the *sudras*—or the fourth ranking caste. About one-eighth of India's population—50 millions—are these untouchables, who to all intents and purposes do not exist in the life of the caste Hindu. In fact in some parts of S. India, their very shadow is said to cause pollution, and their name "achhut" means that a caste Hindu must not be touched by these people and if it so happens that he is, he must immediately take a purifying bath. They live in separate colonies in the most insanitary and horrible of hovels, yet they perform the most important part of our civic lives—clearing the refuse and filth from our streets, dustbins and latrines. In reality it is the highest form of social service which man can perform for man, but the very fact of their occupation serves to degrade them. In all parts of India the treatment of the untouchable has bordered on barbarity, but in South

India it took the most virulent form, particularly along the Malabar Coast where they were treated like lepers. As is inevitable; repression drives one to decadence and decay sets in; the community becomes degenerate. So it has been with the untouchables. The hand of oppression being heavy against them they just sank with every step until they were wallowing in a degeneracy that stank. Physically, morally and spiritually they were losing all hold on themselves, and rotating in a vicious circle of superstition, filth and fear. So heavily is the dice loaded against them to keep them where the upper classes want them to be that they are not allowed cremation, in case they claim the same privilege as the caste Hindus—they are buried in some out-of-the-way burial ground. Thus although being Hindus they were denied the right of cremation, they were denied the right of worshipping their deity side by side with other Hindus, they were not even allowed to draw water from the same well as the upper-class people. Illiteracy amongst them was cent per cent, while they were usually given leavings from the table of their "betters", and every type of humiliation was levelled at them, reducing them to almost an animal-like life. But unlike animals they never snarled, they never protested, they just went on hopelessly from generation to generation.

Gandhiji claims that this system of untouchability is an "excrescence on Hinduism" and that the pure religion is completely free from bars and censures. It was man-made. The caste system was established as a division of labour in the formation of society and that there was no question of superiority or inferiority. "It is, I hold, against the genius of Hinduism to arrogate to oneself a higher status, or assign to another a lower status," he says; again he reiterates: "I have always claimed to be a conservative Hindu . . . . So long as Hindus wilfully regard 'untouchability' as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section

of their brethren *Swaraj* is impossible of attainment." The effect of this intolerance of Hindus was that many of these untouchables left the religion and took to the kindlier ways of Islam, where there were neither distinctions nor victimisation; others were converted to Christianity, but it is tragic that even among Indian Christians the feeling of caste prejudices still flourishes. But the majority stuck to the religion of their forefathers, working out their *Karma* and hoping to be spared a similar fate in their next incarnation, wretched as they were in their present life they would not deviate one iota from the laws laid down for them, for they believed in the superstition that deviation or rebellion would result in their returning to the untouchable life for seven incarnations. So subtle was the cruelty of the arrogant law makers, and how different was Gandhi's attitude when he declared: "If I should be born again I should be so not as a Brahmin, Kshattriya, Vaishya or Sudra but as an untouchable . . . so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts levelled at them in order that I may free myself and them from that miserable condition."

Gandhiji's feelings and thought for the untouchable runs as a thread throughout his life. When he was twelve years old Uka, the untouchable in his home town, came into his life. Uka used to clean latrines, and the child Gandhi was told by his parents that it was wrong to consort with him or even to touch him. Even then he wondered why that should be, and though he was obedient to his parents he could not help protesting against what to him seemed, illogical behaviour. Young as he was he could not believe that this had the sanction of religion, and he often argued with his parents as to why contact with Uka should be considered a sin. At school when he touched "untouchable" children he felt a queer feeling of satisfaction that nothing serious happened after it, and though he always obeyed his mother in carrying

out the purifying ablutions, he did so always in the spirit of gently remonstrating with her that she was wrong in thinking along these lines. It appeared sinful to him that there should be a bar on any of his fellowmen. In his early discussions with his parents and his general feeling about religion and the unfairness of untouchability there is such an aura of adult reasoning about it all to make it reminiscent of the child Jesus in the temple confounding able lawyers with his judgment at the age of twelve.

When Gandhiji took up his residence in South Africa, his household was a hostel for all who needed help and rest. The clerks employed in his office were treated more like brothers than employees, and they too lived with the Gandhis. One of these was an untouchable and finally became the cause of a severe quarrel between Kasturba and Gandhi. This is the way it happened. The idea of having servants had always been abhorrent to his idea of self-help, so that between themselves the household managed their own affairs. It was Kasturba's duty to clean the utensils, about which she never grumbled, but one day Gandhiji saw her taking away one that had been used by his South Indian untouchable clerk grudgingly. He realised that this was because of his caste and he flew into a temper, severely chastising her and even threatening to throw her out if she did not put a better face upon doing service for all without distinction. Her tears moved him to shame but he did not in any way relax his discipline in the matter. Years later, when they were both old people, settled down in Sevagram, some *satyagrahi* Harijans came to the *ashram*, and Gandhiji sent a message to his wife to look after them as if they were her own children. Kasturba's tart retort showed that accustomed though she had become to his ways she had lost none of her spirit: "Tell Bapuji that I am looking after them all right, but as for looking upon them as my own children he had better do that part of it." When Gandhiji's message came

Kasturba had already given up her room to the Harijan guests.

In the Phoenix Settlement in South Africa, as well as later in Sabarmati at the Satyagraha Ashram, the general scavenging was done by the inmates. In fact Gandhiji in his youth and middle age insisted on doing part of it regularly himself. His three younger sons were also from their childhood trained to this among other duties of self-help. Irrespective of caste the general duties of the untouchable were undertaken at his *ashrams* by each inmate. Once while speaking to untouchables he took the example of an 18-year-old Brahmin boy at Sabarmati who took on the duties of a scavenger. Describing this votary he said: "The lad is no reformer. He was born and bred in orthodoxy . . . but he felt that his accomplishments were incomplete until he had become a perfect sweeper." This is a sample of the social revolution which Gandhi's advocacy is able to stir up—humility in those possessed of a superiority complex. How great this achievement is even when measured by the instance of that one *brahmin*, is only appreciable by those who know how rigid these complexes of caste are. Kasturba in spite of Gandhiji's teachings never took kindly in her youth to the untouchable inmates of the *ashram* or household. Thus when at Sabarmati the first untouchable family took shelter with them, none of the women inmates were agreeable about it. In fact the husband, wife and child were really uncomfortable by the want of warmth in the behaviour of the women. Gandhiji was faced with a general boycott outside the *ashram* and disagreeableness within. He advised the untouchables to be patient, and asked the inmates to be more tolerant. Gradually the inherent distaste was worn away and the little family became quite naturally a part of the *ashram*, but the change in spirit was due to Gandhiji's dogged determination. Marital quarrels and Kasturba's angry tears found him adamantine in his prin-

ciples. These things used to make him sad, as indeed her intolerance also did, but through sheer patience, sincerity and love he won her over to his side and through her the other women in the *ashram*. Resistance only made him more determined to achieve final victory; he was prepared to fight every inch of his way for his principles. And more often than can be related he was faced with this in his espousal of the removal of untouchability. This can be counted as one of the momentous lost causes out of the many he has sponsored in his lifetime—except that this is not a lost cause, it is a crusade which has brought consciousness to his fellow countrymen. His achievements in this have been tremendous.

From the time that Gandhiji first took up his position in the Congress—from 1920 onwards—the concrete programme of the uplift of Harijans has been for him in the foreground. It was then that he changed the term “untouchable” into “Harijan” or “Man of God” to emphasise the spark of divinity that there is in us all and to which the untouchable was no exception. To-day the word Harijan is universally accepted, appearing even in the annals of bureaucracy. Political gains or losses during the succeeding years has meant a great deal to Gandhiji but not half as much as the success of his campaign for Harijan uplift. To him it is the keystone of India’s independence. He believes that “there can be no *swaraj* without the removal of the curse of untouchability from our midst” and that “that one act of cleansing will probably solve also the Hindu-Muslim question.” It can be seen perfectly that the unequal treatment and classifications which has been rampant in the name of Hinduism had agitated him from his childhood, and that it was not just a political move to gain the support of 50 million people. It was a conviction upon which his whole life has been modelled. Most of us who are rational thinkers believe that untouchability is the outward sign of an inner disease—that it is the necessary outcome of the feudal system

which was prevalent in India before it was replaced by Britain's colonial system which is yet another aspect of feudal slavery. To-day the question of untouchability is a remnant of feudalism and based on political and economic considerations. This section has been systematically robbed of their minimum rights for centuries—their very submission is a sign of how far the degradation has touched them. Most of us believe that with India's economic reconstruction on an independent basis under a national government the status of untouchables must automatically change. But only under a Socialist republic is this ensured, and as Gandhiji does not envisage such a government, even in an independent India, he is right in feeling that the public conscience in this matter must be roused to a feeling of moral obligation whereby the exploitation of untouchables by the upper castes will really be ended under a more propitious and national *regime*. The moral aspect of the question has touched him to the quick, and inspired him to carry on the campaign with more success than any person has hitherto had. His achievements have been on a nationwide scale and has ensured a chance for a better deal and better living for the Harijans.

After having included removal of untouchability in the Congress programme Gandhiji has kept it always in the foreground as of being as vital in importance as political agitation. He does not look upon this programme as mere social service, to him it is a patriotic duty to cleanse oneself in the process of fighting for one's freedom. In fact during the 1921 non-co-operation he kept on repeating the removal of untouchability just as often as he spoke of the wrongs done by the British. Perhaps he argued it this way that the salvaging of 50 millions and harnessing them to the cause of freedom was a worthy task for any patriot. It was our fault that they had been reduced to bestiality or wandered along other paths, and therefore

it was up to us to do what we could to restore to them their self-respect and their rights. When he called off the non-co-operation in 1922 it was by substituting the programme of *khadi* and Harijan uplift as concrete contributions towards the national cause. From the revolutionary point of view, from the angle of an unrelenting fight for India's freedom this seemed a most sterile policy, the frittering away of national energy on a side-issue. But was it so? Frankly Gandhi did it from a moral angle, a reformist outlook. True it was not the way of a revolutionary towards freedom which must be achieved on the momentum of a people's movement such as there was in 1921 and again in 1930-31, yet the reclamation of Harijans was a grand task and a great achievement if viewed even from a political angle offering the allegiance of untapped resources. Gandhiji himself was guided by the one issue of right and wrong, of justice and injustice and not by the baser political motives which the ordinary mortal understands and weighs in his own mind.

In 1932 he undertook his famous fast unto death unless the seats for the depressed classes were increased in the legislature under the new constitution of 1935. It resulted in the Poona Pact whereby the number of seats were doubled. But his fast created an unprecedented feeling throughout the country. The fact that he was prepared to sacrifice his own priceless life for the sake of the untouchables stirred up decencies that had long been buried out of sight. For the untouchables this was unique, novel, that the most important and best loved individual in India should be willing to die so that their rights might be safeguarded. It took them some time to understand and realize its significance but then for the first time they awoke to the consciousness that they too were India. By the side of the peacock-like ruling princes, the autocratic intelligentsia and the meek agriculturists, the untouchable found himself classed and for the first time discovered that he had

an identity—not negative but positive. Gandhiji's fast brought those shades out of their caverns and clothed them with the attributes of human creatures. Their new found design for living was a novel experience, and while the core of orthodox Hinduism raged and quoted scriptures, as Christ had refuted the Pharisees, so did Gandhi turn and expose them as mere propagandists. He was himself a devoted Hindu, and great believer in the essence of Hindu philosophy; after the study of other religions he had found the ultimate truth and comfort in Hinduism and therefore it was more in sorrow that he would exclaim: "If untouchability belongs to the Hindu religion, then I am not a Hindu." So sure was he of his own faith and belief, and in the intrinsic value of Hinduism that the caste system and untouchability were super-imposed that he could make this assertion knowing that nothing could take away his identity as a Hindu. He never believed in superficial barriers and that inter-marriage or inter-dining could take away anything from one, or that one lost oneself by consorting with untouchables. In this he would always quote the incident of Rama in the Ramayana being piloted across in the boat of Guhak, the *chandal* or untouchable. He would also remark that "Hinduism must be poor stuff if it requires to be protected by an artificial wall of this kind," and that "Hindus are not sinful by nature. They are sunk in ignorance." How right he was and how criminal this ignorance is can be seen by the defensive attitude of communalism adopted by the Muslims as a measure of retaliation against their social ostracism by Hindus. If Gandhiji had not taken up the cause of the untouchables, we might have had them up against the rest of India under the influence of some opportunist and politician. It is entirely due to him and his efforts that even Dr. Ambedkar can in no way create an artificial barrier within the Hindu community by sponsoring aggressively the cause of the depressed classes. Thus

Gandhiji's movement for Harijan uplift has also been a political gain in preventing further diversion which many with the help of Imperialism are willing to provoke.

There is an interesting incident on record, when some of Dr. Ambedkar's followers came to catechise Gandhiji during his Harijan tour of 1932-33. It was at Akola that the meeting took place. Here are some of the questions and answers:

*Question.*—Why did you not work for the Harijan uplift before the Civil Disobedience movement?

*Gandhiji's Answer.*—I began Harijan uplift work in this country in 1920 when I brought the resolution to remove untouchability before the Congress. I began it first in S. Africa and continued the work at Sabarmati in 1915. When the masses were ready to hear me I made it a part of the constructive programme of the Congress.

*Question.*—What is the amount you have spent before now for the uplift of Harijans?

*Answer.*—About Rs. 20,00,000 has been spent for the removal of untouchability and uplift of Harijan. I personally have spent nearly 5 lakhs of rupees. A considerable portion of the Tilak Swaraj fund was spent for this purpose.

*Question.*—Nobody cared for Harijans before the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms. That is why we are still backward to-day. Don't you think so?

*Answer.*—I've not gone to the legislatures. You can ask me what Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhai Patel have done for the Harijans. They have no communal element in their making. Vallabhai works as though he himself were a Harijan.

*Question.*—Had there not been the Poona Pact, do you think the caste Hindus would have given 148 seats for the Harijans?

*Answer.*—Yes.

The Hindus justified Gandhiji's belief in them by readily electing Harijans to the local legislatures wherever they could. As a matter of fact even during the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform days it had become part of Congress propaganda to elect Harijans to the legislatures and this was due to Gandhi's influence and belief in his judgment and leadership. Dr. Ambedkar has not hesitated to villify Gandhiji's championship of the untouchables even from the public platform. But so have the great spirits always been treated, and Gandhiji's only retort is to smile, carry on with his duty and do penance for what has been left undone. How can an opportunist politician understand the ways of a saint! He weighs everything by his own standards.

It was after his fast and the Poona Pact that Gandhiji launched the Harijan movement on a nationwide scale. A public meeting was held in Bombay in September 1932 and the Harijan Sevak Sangh was founded with Gandhiji's old friend and adviser A. V. Thakker as secretary and G. D. Birla, the multi-millionaire capitalist, as President for the ensuing year. Though most of the workers were Congress men and women and Harijan uplift had been taken up as part of Congress programme, nevertheless this body was an independent organisation and neither A. V. Thakkar nor G. D. Birla belonged to the Congress. This was the only way, by setting up a definite organisation, and by recruiting workers, that Gandhiji felt one would be able to counteract the evil and do sufficient counter-propaganda against orthodoxy. The Harijan Sevak Sangh has its headquarters at Delhi, an all-India board of 42 persons who meet once a year, with an executive committee to carry on the work and meet with greater frequency. There are branches in the provinces and the States—25 in number, having 169 district committees working under them. The mission of the Sangh and its branches is not only to educate public opinion regarding Harijans but to

sponsor the social, educational and economic uplift of these people.

The All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh has been functioning in a co-ordinated way for over twelve years now. In taking a *résumé* of their accomplishments one finds that an impetus to the movement was given during Gandhiji's tours in 1933-34 all over India; the various provincial and district centres began really functioning. Gandhiji wanted not only to rouse public feeling but public responsibility as well by making people contribute individually to the cause. Throughout his journeys he lived with his palms outstretched for alms. Like the importunate beggar he coveted ornaments and jewellery—not for himself but for the cause of the unfortunates. For them he became avaricious, and no man or woman could resist his importunity. He also became an expert auctioneer—selling the articles presented to him, and wheedling higher prices by a gesture or a smile which his audience found irresistible. His cry was "Lao lao" (Bring, Bring) and the public responded to it from a feeling of love and service. He was stern with people, not always sweet or reasonable, and he did not hesitate to point out where they failed or were reluctant to give. Young and old, men and women came in numbers to give to him. They were unable to resist his appeal. Europeans and missionaries also came to these meetings and gave contributions.

It was to S. India that he turned his educating campaign in greater earnestness, and there he spoke to *Sanatanists* (orthodox and conservative Hindus) as well as to Harijans in clear unequivocal terms. To the latter he said wherever he met them: "You should realize that you are cleaning Hindu Society. You have therefore to purify your lives. You should cultivate the habits of cleanliness, so that no one may point his finger at you. Some of you are addicted to habits of drinking and gambling which you must get rid of. You claim to be Hindus, you read the

Scriptures; if therefore the Hindus oppress you, then you should understand that the fault does not lie in the Hindu religion but in those who profess it . . . . You have to get rid of evil habits like drinking liquor and eating carrion . . . . You should now cease to accept leavings from plates . . . . Receive grain—only good, sound grain, not rotten grain, and that too if it is courteously offered . . . ." To the *Sanatanists* he gave every protection and opportunity for the expression of their views, even in places like Benares where an ugly reception had been prepared for him which changed into "Mahatma-ji-ki-jai." Kerala (South India) was the worst nucleus of untouchability grievances, and here Gandhiji was put on his mettle by questions and queries. But everywhere he went, including the most rigidly orthodox provinces, he paved the way for the social reforms that were to follow.

On examining these reforms we find that education and the question of temple entry were the pivots for the social and economic uplift of Harijans. It was seen that there was only 5% literacy amongst them, whereupon the Harijan Sevak Sangh set about establishing night schools and Harijan schools all over India. This was vitally necessary as a first step since most ordinary schools would not allow Harijani pupils, so accordingly by the end of 1939 there were 1298 preparatory schools at which 37,089 children were being educated. Since then many ordinary schools have extended their hospitality to Harijans and consequently it has not been necessary to run all the special schools. There are nearly 100 hostels for them where they are able to learn the general principles of clean living, neighbourliness and communal friendship. Madras and Delhi have vocational centres for handicrafts accommodating 100 boys, and over Rs. 10,000 is spent yearly on scholarships to enable the children to take vocational training and thus develop in other lines and ways of living. Together with facilities and encouragement of education

must be taken the improvement in their daily lives and surroundings. Medical aid is made available to them, and their local *panchayats* or rural judicature is strengthened on progressive lines so that instead of tyrannizing over the Harijans they really add to the fulness of their lives. Culture in the form of primitive devotional entertainments is introduced into their midst to create a feeling of appreciation and enjoyment hitherto unknown. There is intensive general propaganda regarding their filthy habits, eating of carrion and drinking alcohol; and whenever better ways and means have been provided the Harijans have not been slow to take advantage. Every opportunity is taken to make them self-reliant and with this end in view there are sweepers' unions and co-operatives wherever possible. These measures are creating a feeling of self-respect among the Harijans. Spinning helps them to find additional economic relief and is important in stabilising them as an equal part of the village community. This type of work—patriotic to the extreme—finds few devotees, and the problem of 50 million souls is so vast, taken in geometrical progression of advancement, that the Sangh finds it more and more necessary to train workers and send them out into the districts. If the band of workers increases and if there is a general awakening throughout India, then the Sangh's work will be much lightened and the Harijan uplift will be a reality in our lives. Gandhiji's dream will have come true.

Coming to the question of temple entry, we must concern ourselves with the fundamentals of its importance. Gandhiji was once asked if the temple entry was a political stunt, and without hesitation he replied that it was purely a question of religious principles. Can there be anything more unjust or criminal than that a man may worship his god, but he is too low in the social scale to stand in the direct presence of his image and claim the right to worship by the side of his fellowmen? The denial of that

right crushed the feeling of individuality and responsibility within the untouchables. Gandhiji determined that this fundamental right must be secured for them, that this great wrong done in the name of religion must be wiped out. He knew full well that he was pitting himself against priesthood and superstition, against those strongly entrenched behind religious formulas and dogmas in his championship of the basic rights of man. Gandhi was a devoutly religious man, and he knew that as religion had taken away so it was only religion that would again restore to the untouchable his belief in himself and his fellows. India's vast masses cling to the temples and weave their faith round them. Therefore began the era of agitation for the right of temple entry for Harijans, and the Congress Ministries in their short period of power from 1937 to 1939 helped to surmount many an obstacle which no reactionary government would have done. The first *satyagraha* on this account took place in 1926 for entry into the Guruvayur Temple in Malabar, and the agitation spread from there to Madura and Srirangam. A good sign at this stage was that 80% of the temple-going people expressed their opinion in favour of opening the temples to the Harijans.

Gandhiji's tour of 1933-34 did much to speed forward the work of temple entry, and several were at that time laid open on the spur of the moment. This was temporary enthusiasm and was not consolidated into something of real standing, and gradually frittered away into nothing, conditions sliding back to their old state. Orthodoxy won that round but the first real significant victory for the other side was in Travancore where even the shadow of a Harijan was considered to pollute an upper-caste Hindu. For six months there was intensive propaganda by the best workers of the Sangh, such as Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru, who addressed meetings and took a general consensus of opinion, whereby practically the entire popula-

tion of the State was brought to request the Maharaja to open the temples, which he did under a Royal proclamation in November 1935. His example worked as a lever on other provinces and states, and Bombay passed the Temple Entry Act in 1938. The same year Maharajah Holker of Indore also ordered the temples to be opened, but as there had been little or no education on this point there it was not until 1939 that the order was put to practical execution. Minor states followed in the wake of Indore and Travancore towards progress.

As Madras was the most backward province with regard to untouchability, some of the cruellest laws having existed there, where the rigidity of the Hindu religion is preserved in all its orthodoxy, Gandhiji's greatest triumph was in Madras when the exclusive and famous temple of Meenakshi Sundareshwar at Madura along with others equally famous and conservative in Tanjore, Kuttalam etc., were opened as a pressure of public opinion without the exertion of governmental authority. Rajagopalachariar was devoted to the cause and he worked with the Harijan Sevak Sangh; there were wildly enthusiastic meetings where popular support was completely won over. Long after the temple entry had been accomplished the Madras Government, under the premiership of Rajagopalachariar, legalised the proceedings indemnifying all those who participated in the reforms.

These are the accomplishments of Gandhiji's great mission. The Harijans signify one great aspect of his eventful life in which he has blended the Saint with the Statesman, in which the religious reformer of great magnitude yies with the politician and patriot but somehow all these trends run into each other enriching the tapestry of India's aspirations. It is interesting that the three papers he founded and ran typify the three stages in his life that are different yet not separated—*Indian Opinion* was the voice of a flaming' defender of the suppressed; *Young*

*India* was the mouthpiece of the leader of political freedom for India and *Harijan* became the weapon of the saint as statesman. There are subtle stages of development between these, yet the general pattern is the same—patriotism and service, truth and non-violence.

## C H A P T E R VIII

### HIS FASTS

MANY people have voiced the opinion that Gandhiji's fasts are mere political blackmail, that he takes advantage of the unique position he occupies among the people of India to exploit this for his dictatorial purposes. There are others who cast a metaphysical meaning and move it to an unapproachable spiritual plane. Yet another section looks upon it as a cult. For Gandhiji however his fasts are simple and natural, as one would pray so he fasts. It is a simple act of self-dedication and the immolation of one's flesh to attain or seek to attain a specified objective. It is not done in any spirit of martyrdom for he himself has said that he enjoys every moment of this purging of his soul for a cause he deems righteous. It is his conviction that by fasting he can reduce the evils of flesh through the medium of his body, and he is quite prepared to sacrifice his life if necessary at the altar of his ideals. Gandhiji is not cunning, therefore his fasts are not a ruse as many people would allege, his enemies in particular; it is a child-like faith in self-mortification that has been common amongst the saints of all faiths. One may call this belief infantile, one might even feel sad that a great soul should endanger his life for what might seem an unimportant issue, one may even feel that this method is futile—on the other hand one may be spiritually inspired.

Whatever it be, each of us according to our convictions, but Gandhiji is no charlatan; his belief is true and unique.

From his youth upwards Gandhiji had experimented in dietetics and gradually come to the realization that correct diet should be frugal and mild. He also felt that fasting had the effect of stimulating the brain for clear thinking as well as enforcing a self-restraint that acted as mental and moral discipline. It was in South Africa, during the days of the Tolstoy Farm, that he first began his experiments in fasting and the effects. As a child he had been used to religious fasts, since in every Hindu household children learn this at an early age from the example of mothers and grandmothers. Children usually do things in imitation of their parents or in compliance to their wishes, so it was with Gandhi as a child and while he understood little of their significance he became quite used to them. His first experiments were on *ekadashi* day (the 11th day of the lunar fortnight) when instead of taking milk and fruit at the end of the day he began to fast without even water. Mr. Kallenbach, the donor of the Tolstoy Farm, also kept him company in these fasts. At the Farm he also encouraged the boys to keep each other's festivals holy—that is the Hindu and Parsi boys kept the Muslims company at the Ramzan fast, and the Muslims did likewise when a Hindu festival demanded a similar sacrifice from them. Thus a general feeling of comradeship was established, while the youngsters learnt to respect each other's feelings. In this way all the inmates of Tolstoy Farm kept their fasts together, either completely or partially as the case might be, and an atmosphere of the ancient ascetic *ashrams* of India where young men served their apprenticeship in self-discipline and self-restraint sprang up round Gandhiji. It was a religious and social experiment in which the old and the young partook with enthusiasm.

To Gandhiji fasting is a moral force, and he looks

upon it as his greatest asset for physical and spiritual strengthening. But fasting physically has little effect if it is not extended mentally where craving disappears in an yearning for the Highest, and finally even the yearning disappears in a feeling of completion. These are his sentiments, which are best expressed in a verse of his favourite lines from the *Bhagavad Gita* as they appear in his autobiography—

"For a man who is fasting his senses  
Outwardly, the sense object disappears,  
Leaving the yearning behind ; but when  
He has seen the highest  
Even the yearning disappears."

But people who wish to deal with the problem dietetically, or those who are not familiar with the ethics of fasting as expressed in Hindu philosophy, they would term this "bogus" or use even severer terms which perhaps in a professional *yogi* might sometimes be applicable but not in a man who combines the qualities of a statesman with those of an ascetic, for there is stern asceticism in the pure Gandhian philosophy. For those who would scoff at soul-force and the exponent of soul-force the way is simple, for he merely disbelieves and dismisses Gandhi as either a simpleton or a charlatan. For those of us who reverence him as a leader—the way of politics might differ, but it is definite that he has injected new life and new incentives into the Indian people and in spite of his moral implications he has adopted strangely practical ways to suit the necessity of politics and these we understand—his fasts leave one face to face with something we cannot fathom and realize. Jawaharlal Nehru's words written during his fast in 1932 seem to crystallize this inability to understand and therefore to appreciate: "Again I watched the emotional upheaval of the country during the fast, and I wondered more and more if this was the right method in politics. It seemed to be sheer revivalism, and clear

thinking had not the ghost of a chance against it. . . . Often enough he was guided in his political activities by an unerring instinct. He had the flair for action, but was the way of faith the right way to train a nation? It might pay for a short while, but in the long run?" This same Jawaharlal whose loyalty and love for Gandhiji is unbounded, who yet differs so strongly from him, again echoes the sentiments of those who do not understand yet reverence him for his deeds too greatly to censure: "What can I say about matters I do not understand? I feel lost in a strange country where you are the only familiar landmark and I try to grope my way in the dark but I stumble." These words are so apt and so true. Every time Gandhiji fasts the nation is struck dumb with apprehension—suppose we lose him? Even when he is not actively participating in politics for a time a feeling of helplessness overshadows all others, and all quibbling, all differences are momentarily submerged.

When Gandhiji called off the first non-co-operation movement as it was gathering momentum, the collected energy broke into fragments of disagreement and achieved planetary motives of their own. Out of this welter communalism was re-incarnated and the happy *camaraderie* of the Khilafat days was lost in blood-thirsty rioting. The Hindu-Muslim feeling was inflamed and aggressive imperialism delightedly continued to fan the embers. Efforts were made by progressive-minded people to do something towards diminishing the feeling of enmity, but even such people as Swami Shraddhananda and Hakim Ajmal Khan failed. In the September of 1924, when the short Indian autumn was falling upon the countryside, bringing a wanton chill heralding winter, Gandhiji began his historic fast for the achievement of Hindu-Muslim Unity. This was the first time he had applied this method to a nation-wide question. He wished in his own sufferings to expiate the feeling of violence that had swept over

the people. This desire is perhaps best understood if one compares it to Christ's agony in the Garden and in his words: "Oh, my father, if it is possible let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt".

Gandhiji desired by this sublimation of self to wash away the blood that had been so wantonly shed. The country was awe-struck, but he persisted and in the home of Dr. Ansari, overlooking Delhi's golf-course, he lay bearing the burdens of his people on his frail body. Those that loved him gathered round him, but none hoped nor sought to dissuade him—so much respect they had for his ideals. There came C. F. Andrews from far Santiniketan, Gandhiji's sons, of course his wife, Swami Shraddhananda, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and others. He told each and everyone of them that this 21 days' fast was a matter between God and himself—self-purification for the forces that had burst beyond the control of his non-violent methods. He had conjured up this mass force and welded it together for the launching of civil disobedience and non-violent non-co-operation, and now when he would want to apply the brake it would not work. Many people would argue that no fast would have been necessary since no occasion for it would have risen in communal disharmony had Gandhiji not called off the movement at the peak of its achievements and allowed this mass energy to be unleashed down reactionary channels; had he directed it in the direction of a fight to the finish with imperialism.

The 21 days wore on slowly—setting the frail body on fire but his spirit remained undaunted and desperately anxious to fight on to the end. A crisis came on the 12th day, but it was his day of silence and to the anxiety of those surrounding him he smiled meekly and wrote on a slip of paper: "You have forgotten the power of prayer." This represented a very substantial bulwark in his life—

guidance through prayer. Every evening simple Gujarati hymns brought relief to his soul, and were like balm to the tortures of his body. He clung to them with all the faith of which he was capable. To him they were significant of his aims and ideals. In the meantime the people of India grew restive, anxious to bring relief to him by achieving the one thing for which he was prepared to sublimate himself. Unity conferences were held, and the principal leaders participated in them. On the last evening of the fast, Gandhiji called to him all those who had assembled, including the Congress Volunteers. Then he asked that the Bhagavad Gita, some verses from the Koran and the hymn "Lead, kindly Light" be recited as part of prayers befitting the cause of unity. Later he broke his fast with a glass of orange juice. Hakim Ajmal Khan and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad assured him of their ceaseless striving for unity on behalf of the Muslims and Swami Shraddhananda on behalf of the Hindus. Thereafter communal fracas ceased for some time; and all those who had pledged themselves worked for unity without ceasing. Swami Shraddhananda paid the price of martyrdom for his labours, Hakim Ajmal Khan has left behind him a sainted memory amongst both peoples and Azad is even to-day fighting for the ideals of communal unity. The spirit of that fast and the light of sacrifice served as a beacon and a warning to both Hindu and Muslim for many a day.

Gandhiji's next three fasts were undertaken solely for the untouchables, and his work for them. The most momentous of these was in September 1932 which ended in the conclusion of the Poona Pact. Earlier that year he arrived back in India after the second Round Table Conference and concentrated on his Harijan uplift movement. He realized then that the seats allotted to the depressed classes were too few to be of real use to them, and they would continue to be exploited by the upper castes. There-

fore he decided upon a fast unto death unless some settlement could be arrived at. It was a challenge to the upper classes, and a promise to the Harijans, so ignorant of their rights. The challenge was that of love—that they who professed to love him, believe in him, what were they prepared to do for those whose cause he had sponsored? He was prepared in this case to die for his belief, if by his death this horrible cleavage between the classes and the exploitation of the depressed would finally cease. To him at this stage his life was valueless if his service to the cause of Harijans was not to be effective. But as at the time of the Delhi fast, so now the people sought to rally together and try some solution. The Poona Pact between the Caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes ceded to the latter almost double the number originally allotted to them. This agreement was accepted by Ramsay Macdonald and was incorporated in the Government of India Act. Once more, before actually the endangering of his life, the people rallied round him thereby preventing his fasting unto death. His belief had been justified. (When sometime later one of Dr. Ambedkar's men tried to heckle him by questioning the *bonafides* of the Caste Hindus, saying that had he not undertaken the fast unto death nobody would have cared for the disabilities of the depressed classes, Gandhiji replied that their answer to his call was the utmost proof of their sincerity and that they only needed somebody to make them realize their own deficiencies. So great is his belief in individual integrity and in the real message of Hinduism. This fast inflicted the final blow to the declining second non-co-operation movement but roused mass consciousness in a different way and directed it into reformist channels rather than political ones.

While still in prison in May 1933, he announced his decision to undertake a 21-day fast "for reasons wholly unconnected with Government and solely connected with the Harijan movement and in obedience to a peremptory call

from within." He was released by Government within a week and began his second fast in the cause of the removal of untouchability. He was moving further away, at this stage, from the revolutionary political arena into a reformative plane of social service on a gigantic scale. It cannot be said that he had separated himself from the national movement, since he was engaged in erasing that which had hitherto been such a shameful blot on the fair name of India. He was occupied in rehabilitating Harijans so that they too might take their share in the national struggle. This was constructive work—valuable to the extreme and revolutionary in conception—but it in no way contributed to the immediate advancement of India's political future and freedom from British rule. Nevertheless Gandhiji kept and survived his fast, and imbibed an inner strength coupled with a clearness of vision which were his bulwark in the struggles ahead, and these struggles were acute, being against the sentiments and orthodoxy of his own countrymen. But within two months Gandhi was re-arrested, and again in August he began another fast—the third in this series for the removal of untouchability—for proper facilities in his work for the Harijans. Within a week he was released, and this saw the final calling off of the civil disobedience movement which had lingered only in spirit, and his devoting himself primarily to the cause of the Harijans. The sum total of these three fasts has been on both the credit and debit side. On the credit side we may count the beginning of concrete work for the reclamation of the untouchables—a substantial contribution to national life. On the debit side is the tragic frittering of national energy by diverting it into reformative paths which would have been better marshalled and flung into the battle for Indian independence. This led to the fragmentation of the national movement into by-paths of communalism and terrorism—both being dangerous and destructive without any actual achievements towards freedom on a

nationwide basis. Gandhiji, by his leadership, could have directed mass energy into more fruitful channels.

The "fiery five days" during the Rajkot fast were blazoned across the firmament of Indian life. In 1934 Gandhiji virtually left the Congress and did not participate in politics till he was called once more in 1941, yet his influence and hold upon the people was such that once more an emotional resurgence swept over the country on hearing that he was undertaking another fast in his advancing years. The nation stood aghast wondering how much the frail frame of his body could withstand—perhaps they did not understand the efficacy of soul force, or perhaps they just dumbly and devotedly loved him without being able to fathom motives and ideals. The fast commenced on March 3rd, 1939, when Gandhiji's ultimatum to the Thakore Sahib of Rajkot expired. The villains of the piece was Sir Patrick Cadell, the dewan of Rajkot, who in all but name had tried to usurp the powers of the ruler; and Darbar Virawalla, a local nobleman, whose intrigues precipitated the crisis. The issue at stake was a more democratic representation of the people in the affairs of the State. Sardar Vallabhai Patel had been working in the matter for some time and had arrived at an agreement with the ruler of the State. But the arrangement was vetoed first by Sir Patrick Cadell, but when summary and exemplary measures were taken in establishing the powers of the ruler, Darbar Virawalla, originally exiled from Rajkot for intrigue, returned promising to smooth matters over. Instead he inflamed the situation by planned intrigue and thus created a breach between the intermediaries of the people and the ruler. Things went from bad to worse and the people had to resort to *satyagraha*, thus courting the horrors of State imprisonment. Into *satyagraha* Kasturba Gandhi flung herself together with Maniben Patel. Kasturba was a native of Rajkot and thus both she and her husband felt that she had a certain

duty towards the people of her childhood's home. Many people wondered that she dared to undertake it in her ageing years, but empowered with conviction, she threw herself into the movement heart and soul. She was detained as "state-guest" as Gandhiji was informed and found it to mean nothing more nor less than imprisonment. Finally, when Virawalla continued his tactics in spite of the *satyagraha*, Gandhiji left his Wardha home to try his persuasion on the Thakore Sahib to redeem his promise. He too felt a duty towards Kathiawad, his native province, and as if impelled by a divine force, crossed half of India to throw in his lot with the people of Rajkot. Once arrived he tried his best to convince all concerned as to the advisability of a compromise. He met the Resident, wrote to the Thakore Sahib and explained the rights of the case. But those who do not wish to see light will never do so, and finally Gandhiji gave his ultimatum up to March 2nd for the ruler's agreement to what he had promised, failing which he would begin his fast on the next day. He visited Kasturba in prison and asked her opinion, and she too said that it was the only way. Accordingly on March 3rd he began his fast. His wife was not allowed to be near him, though after the first two days she was permitted to see him once a day for a little while. As in his other experiences Gandhiji was sustained by the inward fire of his righteous cause, while the fast slowly ate into his vitality. On the third day came a message asking whether he would accept the Viceroy's word that the Thakore Sahib's promises could be honoured. Gandhi agreed, saying that he had no cause to doubt His Excellency's word, and once more the telegraphic wires grew hot and busy between Delhi and Rajkot. On the seventh of March at 2-25 p.m. came the Viceroy's reply that he would be responsible for the carrying out of the reforms, and Gandhiji broke his fast. Simultaneously Kasturba and Maniben Patel were both released with the other

*satyagrahi* prisoners. The point arises whether Gandhiji was correct in receiving and accepting the Viceroy's assurance which after all was rather a super-imposition on the powers of the ruler. Actually he was defeated in this that the Thakore Sahib himself gave no undertaking, but the Viceroy as representative of the Paramount Power (Britain), whom the rulers are bound to obey, did so. The achievement was there in the establishment of a more democratic rule whether through the Thakore Sahib or by compulsion from above. How correct was this procedure when adopted by the initiative of non-co-operation? Gandhiji has a simple belief in the integral honesty of people, and not even to the representative of Imperialism does he deny this in spite of having failed more than once, and therefore he said that he had no cause to doubt the Viceroy's word or reject his offer of mediation. The cause of the people would perhaps have been strengthened had the Thakore Sahib been forced to recognition not by the Paramount Power but by the strength of the people. Therein lay Gandhiji's defeat even in the midst of his achievement.

Gandhiji was arrested, with the other members of the Congress Working Committee, on August 9th, 1942. On 11th February, 1943, he notified the Viceroy that he was beginning a 3 weeks' fast from noon that day. The Government offered to release him and whomsoever he wished *for the duration of the fast*, but Gandhiji declined and said that in that case he would call off the fast unless he were unconditionally released. Thus it became a question of prestige for the British Government and one of life and death for Gandhiji. Earlier in his imprisonment he had lost the devoted Mahadev Desai, but Kasturba was still with him. The authorities gave permission for Dr. Gilder and Sushila Nair, also in imprisonment, to be with him. From Bombay went Dr. Jivraj Mehta, from Calcutta Dr. B. C. Roy, both devoted physicians of Gandhiji, while Lt.-Col. Bhandari, the

jail superintendent, issued daily bulletins in consultation with them.

It was an unusual venue for a fast. In the gilded palace of the Aga Khan, the friend and lackey of British Imperialism and the owner of millions, lay Gandhi whose small thin body could scarcely bear the agonies of the flesh. That palace conceived in luxury was a golden cage for the indomitable spirit of the man who was as destitute of personal belongings as the Indian peasantry is on an average. The palace was his prison, and there he lay in his august surroundings still an ascetic and a prisoner, wearing out his body by the rigours he forced upon himself. Once again everything took second place to the whispered query regarding Gandhiji's health and how he was bearing up. Even the war, so much with us, seemed remote when compared with the all-burning question whether he would survive this fast. To obtain gold one must burn dross, to those who seek the treasures of the spirit the purification of the body through suffering is like the burning out of dross. How long can a mortal body stand such strain? This was the question that lingered on every lip, it was caught up in the Central Assembly, it pushed away communal differences and took prominence in provincial legislatures and inspired those who continuously besieged the Government of India for his release. Even the far away House of Commons was disturbed by it. This period is noted for the resignation of Sir H. P. Mody and Mr. N. R. Sarker from the Viceroy's Council as a protest against the Government's policy. This was a substantial gain in this that consciousness however belated and national duty had penetrated even those who had not hesitated to take up quisling appointments under the Government of India. There was general consternation in the country, but the British Government was determined that Gandhi should not be released, India must be made to feel the full weight of Imperialism's domination.

Thus while the Japs made full propaganda on account of this inhuman behaviour, the Government of India kept Gandhiji in prison under the Defence of India Rules. The irony of fate! The horror of being leaderless, being without the man who had ever since 1919 occupied the primary position in Indian affairs, was upon the people and bitterness grew in their hearts. Only Gandhiji was sublime, saintlike and peaceful, inexorably carrying out his self-purification. Once more leading politicians hastened to Delhi, once more they conferred and again and again pleaded for his unconditional release. In the midst of this silent mass hysteria that was creeping over India Gandhiji carried on while the world waited breathlessly. Foreign correspondents, British and American friends, notables in India all waited at the gates of the Palace to receive day-to-day news. In Britain and America mass meetings were held protesting against Gandhi's imprisonment, leading intellectuals and progressives participating. Throughout the trial Kasturba tended him, little knowing that soon she too must leave him. At last on March 1st the fast was over, and weak, as he was, he was alive, in his senses and unshaken. The dumbness of relief long sought was upon the people—it was sufficient that he was alive, for the moment nothing else mattered.

These are the stories of Gandhi's major fasts. In the world of to-day they are as out of place as is the gentle bullock in the land of tractors. But that is the exact reason why their contribution has been great spiritually and morally. It has again and again forced realisation that nobody but he occupies the unique position which he holds in the hearts of the people. To him they look up as a preceptor and a revolutionary, whether these roles are compatible and whether he justifies their belief or not we are not prepared to discuss here, but the turbulent emotions which his fasts conjure up prove again and again without doubt that there is no leader of his magnitude in this country.

For 25 years he has held the devotion of India's millions, what he could have done or what he has done do not come up for examination here, but suffice it to say that at moments of crisis they turn to him and on the eve of his self-inflicted fasts they find themselves overwhelmed with a feeling of impending loss. What greater tribute or consistency can any leader desire? It may be said that the repercussions of his fasts are an index to national feeling and unchanging loyalty and belief in him.

## *C H A P T E R IX*

### NATIONAL EDUCATION

GANDHIJI's ideas on educational reconstruction are based on the fact that India is primarily an agricultural country and that she possesses 700,000 villages. Therefore from the start, while expounding his views, he has said that the system he wishes to initiate is centred round village economy. He does not wish the villages to remain as they have become dependent on the cities for everything, completely denuded of self-expression. If they are to be reconstructed and re-constituted the system of education must be such that it should add to the richness of village life. So far the cities have robbed rural life of significance and fullness while the villages exist merely as appendages of the cities and towns of comparatively recent growth, and this is as much a fault of the existing system of education as of superficial industrialisation.

There are no two opinions about the evil of the existing system of education which Macaulay foisted upon India, resulting in effecting mass illiteracy and according to Gandhi even "the measure of illiteracy is no adequate measure of the prevailing ignorance among the millions

of villagers". So much of our premises on education are based on literacy and illiteracy, so much of our energy is spent in trying to make people able to write their names—but when we come to consider facts we have to admit that mere literacy does not take us far. Therefore Gandhiji rightly says that "literacy is not the end, not even the beginning—it is just one of the ways by which we can become educated." Hence in considering education one has to take the development of the mind, body and soul into consideration, and the rôle of the child in national life has to be conceived before we begin to mould it into certain ways. The State, says Gandhi, has a definite duty towards the child, but the child too has important duties towards the State or country. Education, therefore, must be planned according to how we construe these respective obligations.

India suffers from many handicaps—the principal one is of alien rule, which has resulted in the imposition of a foreign language. It is also not a developed, and therefore a poor country—and under the Government of India Act of 1935, in the budget after all the expenditure for defence etc., the only income left to be expended on education is that derived from excise duties. Gandhiji characterises this as "the cruellest irony", and there can be no better descriptive phrase of the position either from one who is the exponent of prohibition or from a nation much of whose degradation has come through liquor. Therefore if one waits for the usual Government ways of dispensing education it can never become universal, compulsory and free unless special taxes and death duties are levied. Since that is not being done, and the rich grow still richer and we are faced with Imperialistic economy which is ruinous for the country Gandhiji has put forward as one of his primary ideas the one of a self-supporting school. The basic idea underlying it is the wedding of handicraft to literacy, and achieving education. The prin-

ciple of 'earn while you learn' comes out of it. The child will be initiated into a productive handicraft, e.g., spinning, leatherwork, wood carving, etc., and through this medium he will be instructed in the other usual school subjects.

Modern education throughout the world has found that crafts allied to lessons produce better results in children, and that through play and other constructive elementary work the child is able to amass a certain knowledge that remains longer with him than mere book cramming. Gandhiji suggests that instead of a child making things for the school museum, he should learn to make things that will be marketable as well as those that will help him to qualify himself for a particular trade. From the sale of these articles the establishment cost of the school will be found. Several objections from conservative educationists came to him. One was that the idea of learning a craft at school was mediæval—to which Gandhiji replied that in mediæval times it is true that the child was taught a craft but not as a means of education, merely to be able to earn money and have a profession. The thing was mechanical, but he contemplated scientific training whereby the child would know the why and the wherefore of the thing he was learning, so as to be able to apply his brains to it and know exactly the reason for each step he took. The second objection was that this would be just like exploiting child labour as in the semi-slave plantations of Ceylon—Gandhiji explains that in the plantations the labourer's labour is the main thing and he is not treated as a student. In the school there is no case of exploitation, because the children are not being made to work to provide money for somebody else; but so that they may be educated not only by books but by a handicraft that will in turn help them to a livelihood later in life. The third question was regarding wastage of raw materials and whether the people would be forced to buy the imperfect-

ly made things constructed by children—there can be no doubt that there would be some wastage at the start, but with proper training even after the first year there would be some gain. The nation would certainly not be compelled to buy these things but the State would find a market for them and Gandhiji felt sure that “the nation is expected to buy with pardonable pride and patriotic pleasure what its children make for its needs.” The last objection was regarding starting thus an unfair competition with the local artisans—to which Gandhiji replied that sufficient care would be taken that such competition or conflicts did not arise. Finally he said that he believed in self-supporting schools because (1) it would be too long a process to get Government to spend enough money for compulsory education and he wanted mass education within the generation; (2) it would give the child a definite sense of duty to his country and the feeling of being a unit in a collective whole; (3) creation of real scientific craftsmen by allying handicraft to education. Here it is not to be confused with merely having some handicraft added to the general school curriculum, but having the handicraft as the basic medium for education. The emphasis is laid on the handicraft as a medium. This will create experts, who do not at the moment exist. The alliance of intellect with manual labour is the central idea; there is no question of one without the other.

Gandhiji is no education expert, his ideas were the result of his long association with the people and knowledge of what they stand most in need. Therefore his major premise is that all education must be in the language of the people to be at all effective and lasting. The next important issue is the question of being self-sufficient. He visualises the formulation of the details being based on the two broad principles:

“I. Primary education extending over seven years or longer and covering all the subjects up to matricula-

tion standard except English, plus a vocation used as the vehicle for drawing out the minds of boys and girls in all departments of knowledge, should take the place of what passes to-day under the name of primary, middle and high school education.

"2. Such education, taken as a whole, can, must be self-supporting; in fact self-support is the acid test of its reality."

On the second of these points it has been already recorded how Gandhiji refuted his questioners. As regards the first he is of opinion that secondary education, as it is, is a waste of years during which time the pupil merely learns in English all that he has already learnt in his mother tongue in primary and middle schools, and a very imperfect knowledge of the English language. The three stages take a child eleven years, whereas by cutting out secondary or high school education they save four years, by leaving out some of the subjects taught in high school and making the primary education of seven years up to matriculation standard. Thus at the age of fourteen a child will have the asset of one handicraft scientifically learnt as well as the mātric standard of literary education. By cutting out English and reducing everything to the mother tongue it is possible to make the work easier for the children and thereby save four years of drudgery trying to imperfectly master a foreign language.

Gandhiji takes college education as real secondary education, and of necessity this too must be revolutionised. It must be correlated to national necessities. His idea of training industrial experts and engineers is novel but would be satisfactory if accepted. The industrial concerns would be expected to run colleges, train their engineers and experts and absorb them into the industry once they were qualified. Medical colleges would be attached to hospitals subsidised by the rich since it would be they who would

use the doctors and nurses, while the State would be prepared to absorb them on passing out for local health and welfare work. The agricultural colleges would have to be self-supporting, otherwise there would not be any proper training for the students. The question of practical experience would be thus solved, since if their apprenticeship was served on a farm that became self-sufficient and self-supporting due to their efforts, their credentials in agriculture would be correspondingly high. All these institutions would of course be run under State supervision.

In the question of self-supporting education there is involved the question of prohibition, since it has been already mentioned that if we were to follow the ordinary course of education as laid down by the government one must be dependent on the liquor revenue for this. The vital point is, if Gandhiji's solution of self-supporting schools is not acceptable, then one must either allow the degeneracy of the nation through drink or sacrifice the education of our children and initiate prohibition. Gandhiji is of the opinion that the rejuvenation of the nation through prohibition is of far greater importance than education as it is to be had to-day. But if one adopted the idea of self-supporting schools no longer would there be the acute financial problem which faces educationists to-day. The idea of a basic craft as the means of visual education is a novel idea, it is true, but it is a strangely practical one for a nation whose economy is so lopsided, and the majority of whose rural population suffer such destitution. To-day when Bengal is faced with the great problem of rehabilitation after last year's famine, one feels the want of the Wardha Education Scheme, as Gandhiji's ideas came to be called, and teachers trained under it. Especially in fighting adult illiteracy is this idea of a basic craft of utmost value. People generally cannot visualise this method of approach, but on studying the syllabus of the scheme as compiled by Dr. Zakir Hussain, one finds untold possibi-

lities. The period of instruction is approximately seven years, therefore the complete scheme is divided into seven grades. Taking the basic craft as agriculture in Grade I the pupils will be 7 years old and this is how their training is planned:

*Practical*

1. Sowing of seeds in the nursery.
2. Watering the nursery.
3. Use of seedlings and plants (garden).
  - (a) watering, (b) weeding, (c) mulching, (d) picking insects, (e) manuring the nursery and small garden plants with fertilisers.
4. Collection of seeds of flowers, plants and vegetables in the garden.
5. Animal husbandry. Feeding domestic birds and animals. Taking care of the young of pets.

*Theoretical*

1. Recognition of a plant and its different parts. Roots, stems, leaves, flowers and fruit.
2. How a plant develops from the seed. Seed, root, stem, leaves, flowers and fruit.
3. What the plant needs for its growth. Soil, water, food, light and air.

4. Uses of birds and animals.

In addition to this the boys will be taken round the fields in the village for observational purposes.

Together with this in Grade I the child would learn Hindusthani and his own mother tongue by familiarising him with the culture of his country through myths, legends, poetry, song, reading and writing; social study, general science, drawing and mathematics. But all these would be allied to the basic craft. In the final grade, that is when the boy is 14, he approaches the matriculation standard in all his normal subjects, plus a fund of general knowledge and in his basic craft—in this case agriculture—he attains such expert knowledge as cattle diseases, farm accounts, study of pests, cattle breeding, co-operation etc. Thus even without going to college and

taking degrees the young boy can take up farming; efficiently and scientifically having acquired a practical and theoretical knowledge consistently for seven years, during which time he has put in enough productive manual labour to pay for his education. Thereby his moral training as a citizen having a certain duty towards his country grows up within him while he develops a self-respect and independence that will go far to build the morale of the nation. The State has certainly a duty towards its young but in a country where means are limited and results must be quickly achieved, the State can best discharge its duties by absorbing the educated youth in the various branches necessary for the upliftment of the country in general. The plan therefore in a nutshell is, to quote Gandhiji's own words:—

"(1) Taken as a whole a vocation or vocations are the best medium for the all-round development of a boy or a girl, and therefore all syllabus should be woven round vocational training.

"(2) Primary education thus conceived as a whole is bound to be self-supporting even though for the first or even second year's course it may not be wholly so. Primary education here means as prescribed above."

He also goes on to say, that in the present circumstances, "in no other way can primary education be made free, effective and compulsory." Gandhiji quotes his practical experiences in the Tolstoy Farm in the Transvaal, where the children had about a couple of hours book learning and the rest was occupied with vocational training in digging work, scavenging, simple carpentry and messenger work. The ages of the children varied from 6 to 16. His own three younger sons he also brought up on the ideal of manual labour, together with a scholarly training which did not entail the passing of examinations or the taking of degrees. Of these three—two are editors of papers—Manilal edits the "Indian Opinion" in Durban,

Devdas is editor of the "Hindusthan Times" in Delhi. The third one died young. His eldest son who broke away from his father early to take the usually prescribed school and college education has caused much humiliation and sorrow to his parents. He became a ne'er-do-well and obtained his relaxation in reviling his father. He has not been able to make a mark in the world, except through notoriety, in spite of what he considered superior advantages of education over his brothers. Many people have reprimanded Gandhiji that he had not given his sons a proper chance in life by not having them educated in the conventional and prescribed way of degrees etc. But he maintains that they have a far sounder grounding of practical and theoretical things that would be of service to the country than if they had had the usual routine of school and college life. He sometimes wonders whether his sons in any way blame him for this, but from all accounts they are appreciative of his vision, discipline and training, for in no way has he treated them preferentially to the other children in his charge. The Gandhi boys had to take their turn at scavenging etc., with the other inmates of the *ashram*.

Gandhiji's idea is that handicraft should be used as a means of intellectual growth, and must be taught not merely as a productive proposition but for developing the child's intellect. Through such means the idea of the dignity of labour, so much spoken of and so rarely understood, will become concretised and actual in the lives of the people. Manual labour is important in rural education but not as a supplementary thing but one around which the entire syllabus must revolve. Gandhiji specially emphasises it as being the means whereby the brain must be stimulated. This vocational training will not be done under pressure but as naturally and simply as a child learns to make mudpies. It will be initiated gradually and the approach will be psychological so that

it becomes work and play combined sustaining his interest and quickening his intelligence. In this way the child will learn to produce useful things, and be able to co-operate with the State in his own upbringing. Gandhiji disapproves of mechanically learning to do things without a theoretical grasp, as ultimately this only serves to stunt mental growth, therefore the practical and the theoretical must march side by side. In this way the education thus given will serve as "a kind of insurance against unemployment for them".

A very relevant and important side of educational reconstruction is that of teachers. What is one going to do? Would the present type of teachers be unsuitable and would we get a sufficient number for the experiment to be truly successful? Gandhiji visualises a teachers' training college in the details of basic education, but in the present urgency the ordinary teachers should be given a speedy training course and be drafted into the village schools. No teacher would have more than 25 children under him or her. Salaries would not be princely, in fact they would be just enough to enable them to live in comfort in their village surroundings. Prof. K. T. Shah advised "conscription of teachers" to make the scheme function widely. Many people objected to this saying that by using compulsion the tradition of service in education would be gone. Gandhiji contended by saying on the contrary that there would be the necessity of patriotism and a desire to work for the people under the new scheme, while under the present order they were not interested in their work but did it from purely economic reasons, and as such they were mere "hirelings". It was necessary, from his point of view, that the teachers working under the present system be imbued with zeal and eagerness to participate and help in the task of national regeneration.

Gandhiji maintains that if India is truly and sincerely to follow the path of non-violence then the type of educa-

tion he has formulated is the only one fitting into the scheme of constructive policy and national discipline. "We are told," says Gandhi, "that England spends millions on education, America also does so, but we forget that all that wealth is obtained through exploitation. They have reduced the art of exploitation to a science and might well give their boys the costly education they do. We cannot and will not think in terms of exploitation and we have no alternative but this plan of education which is based on non-violence." Again he also said: "It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way in eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages and lay the foundation of a juster social order in which there is no unnatural division between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom. And all this would be accomplished without the horrors of a bloody class war or a colossal capital expenditure such as would be involved in the mechanisation of a large continent like India." By these words he sums up the ideals for which basic education, such as he prescribes, would be of the utmost benefit to India.

All this time we have spoken of Gandhiji's ideas on education being based on rural economy, but we come to its adoption in the city with the request from a leading Bombay educationist in 1938 as to how it might be utilized in urban areas. Gandhiji expresses no doubt whatever that a vocational basis for primary education would be valuable in the training of the city child. Apart from its actual mental, spiritual and physical stimulation, he felt that it could be extended to larger number while saving the government a substantial expenditure. As regards the vocation most suitable to city children Gandhiji declares that he is anxious to establish a better relationship between

the cities and the villages, and therefore the vocation advocated for city children should be related to the needs of the villages. He suggested that ginning, cleaning and spinning of cotton might be taken as a useful basic craft that would serve as a link with the villages where the cotton is grown.

His ideas have naturally evoked much controversy and partisanship, but people who were generally concerned over the regeneration of India, could not but concede that the scheme has great practical possibilities and is fundamentally fitted for rural economy. In a country which has such agricultural potentialities, and where the peasantry is so poor, this type of education through a basic craft, making even a child an earning member of a family without forcing labour upon him, is without a doubt the most beneficial for general development. But it means sacrifices and patriotism amongst the sponsors and the teachers if the scheme is ever to succeed. It also means a complete understanding that occupational training has to serve an educational purpose, and not as an appendage to liberal education if the Gandhian ideal is to become a reality. The salvation of the villages depends upon this scheme being put to function. Prof. K. T. Shah has said: "I like two points in Gandhiji's scheme: first that the medium of instruction should be the mother-tongue and secondly that education should be given through some form of handwork. Manual training not only develops the intellect and trains the nervous system of the body but also creates self-confidence. . . But by trying to make education self-supporting you will create in the boys from the very beginning a feeling of exchange motive which is by no means desirable. I am sure that if you involve the students in this economic muddle at the age of 7, a kind of slavery would creep in." Dr. Zakir Hussain's commentary upon practical difficulties was: ". . . But the greatest difficulty will be the paucity of

trained teachers . . . I myself am a teacher but if I am asked to-day to teach all the subjects through spinning I shall have to encounter great difficulties. Of course if I have with me books which show the way of correlating general education with the various processes of cloth making, I shall be able to teach my students with the help of these books. The preparation of such text books will require some time and labour. . . . But you will say that we want self-supporting schools because we are poor. Quite. But I should like to utter a note of warning. . . . Teachers may, in consequence, become slave drivers and exploit the labour of poor boys . . . and we shall be laying the foundations of a hidden slavery in our country." Gandhiji's reply to this was that all good things can become bad by falling into evil hands and therefore that should be safeguarded against. He also made it quite clear that he did not want the village children's education to be confined only to handicrafts, it would include the usual general subjects as well as the artistic ones of drawing, painting and music. The school hours should not be more than five, and he calculated that within the first year each child would be earning two pice daily going up progressively every year. There should be no sectarian religious instruction—"because I am teaching them practical religion, the religion of self-help," said Gandhiji.

Thus if one is to sum up and concretise Gandhiji's ideas on educational reconstruction one would place foremost the practical knowledge of the dignity of labour, that irrespective of caste each person should learn some basic handicraft, whichever is most suitable to the child and the province. Compulsory primary education is not possible for India under the present structure because the expense would make the Government bankrupt. Under this situation the only solution is self-supporting education. The only means of really benefiting the rural areas is by having the medium of instruction in the mother tongue,

telescoping the secondary with its primary education with the exclusion of English, and extending primary education up to matriculation standard. This period would mean the saving of four years. General education should be built up round a basic craft, which should form the hub of all planning. There will be practical and theoretical training in every branch of education—that is for instance hygiene and social science will not be confined merely to text books but by planning a programme of service to the whole village.

Gandhiji's scheme of education is revolutionary in thought and deed. He does not hesitate to admit that it is based on rural economy, and it will prevent villagers from becoming half-baked city dwellers without any incentive or prospect of contributing nationally to any cause. It is to regain and salvage the lost youth of this country that he has envisaged this form of basic education. Naturally it is different from the ideals of the Western peoples, and any scheme that is primarily for the children of India in their present condition must be so. Except for his insistence on handicraft in principle and ideals it differs little from the progressive education imparted to children in Soviet Russia. Dignity of labour upon which Gandhiji rightly places such insistence is the watchword of the Soviet Union; the citizenship and self-help too is their criterion. Thus it will be seen that any country whose leaders are attempting national regeneration must leave the conventional and the superimposed forms of education which have only succeeded in swelling the ranks of the unemployed, and chalk out a way of thought and living for the children so as to serve as "an insurance against unemployment". In comparing the ideas of Gandhi with that of the educational projects launched in Soviet Russia, one finds that the ends of both are not dissimilar, but the means are divergent. Both these systems are endeavouring to safeguard the country's interests, in

the interests of its youth and protecting against their exploitation by others.

The Wardha Education Scheme is a compilation of Gandhiji's ideas and was put under the supervision of a few expert and devoted men and women to direct operations throughout the country. It was to go hand in hand with prohibition to prove that the excise revenue was not necessary for education. But it was short-lived, lasting only as long as the Congress Ministries were in power. The moment they resigned everything was uprooted and tares were deliberately sown where wheat should have been reaped. But while it was in execution it brought fresh life into the Indian village and new hope into the people. They felt assured of a future for their children. Diehard educationists laughed, derided and waited for the scheme to peter out; when it did stop it was not because of its inefficiency but because of ruthless and deliberate suppression.

How will Gandhiji's ideas and schemes stand if and when India is industrialised? It will remain, I feel, as a valuable contribution as India is or must remain primarily agricultural if she is to be a self-contained country providing food for her 400 millions. Education mustered round a basic industry will do much to create expert craftsmen, who will either propagate handicrafts and village industries or join for higher scientific training for employment in heavy industry. Gandhiji's contribution to educational reconstruction is highly important and not likely to be easily surpassed though perhaps in later years to suit the tide of events it might be supplemented and modified. There is however one tragic condition, that unless there is substantial power in the hands of nationalist India there is no chance of any beneficial educational schemes being tried, until then education will remain reactionary and useless.

## C H A P T E R X

### THE WAR COMES TO INDIA

IT came with a flourish—overnight the people of India found themselves at war with Germany. This stirred in them once more the consciousness that a slave nation is tied to the chariot of its master and must go wherever he wills, and the Congress woke to this realisation which its parliamentary days had lulled to sleep. In spite of much talk of dominion status India found herself in quite a different position to South Africa and Australia, and it was an insult to her nationhood that without the slightest deference to her wishes she was towed along with Great Britain's line of action. When one realises India's anti-Fascist traditions during the pre-war years this treatment accorded to her seems preposterous, as even then Britain was flirting with Japan for friendship when Indian leaders had already declared unequivocally their stand by China.

After his resignation from the Congress in 1934 Gandhi had busied himself with the constructive programme of *khadi* and Harijan uplift and with developing the ethics of non-violence. Thus, though he kept away from active politics, his personality dominated the background in a shadowy fashion—that is that the political world remained fully aware of his presence without his active association or participation in the movement. The Congress as a body made strides forward on the Socialistic plane under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and identified itself with the anti-Fascist ideals of Spain, China and Soviet Russia. The Gandhian vanguard of Rightists under the leadership of Patel and Rajagopalachariar, with Jawaharlal serving to bridge the differences between them and the rising younger Socialists, remained within the Congress to propagate his views and ideals. So that

if Gandhi had resigned his membership of the Congress his spirit continued to impregnate the scene. The Old Guards of the nationalist struggle did not quite relish the developing tempo on Socialist lines and they maintained the correctness of the Gandhian way, but for the time being it appeared as if the nation was truly being led onward into a channel that would ultimately develop into revolutionary Socialism and leave behind it the older tactics in a united front with the workers and peasants. Criticism of Gandhi had been that being essentially a *bourgeois* leader he was afraid to unleash the power of the people; it seemed as if away from his influence the national movement was being moulded into a people's movement with mass appeal and not as an avenue of activity for just the intelligentsia. In 1934 due to the repressive policy of Imperialism the Congress membership had sunk to below 457,000, but a new era seemed to have opened out from the Lucknow Congress held in 1936 and by 1940 the membership had risen to 6 millions. The movement was growing along international lines, forming alliances with progressive powers abroad and recruiting mass support. In 1936 at the Lucknow Congress it was decided to contest the coming elections, and a manifesto was issued on behalf of the Congress candidates which met with universal approval at the Faizpur sessions in December 1936. Thus it would seem that with the Congress developing into a mass party Gandhi's influence in the country had waned, but this is a total misapprehension. His name remained one to conjure with and most of the candidates won their seats to the legislature with the cry "Gandhiji-ki-jai" on their lips. The principal complaint of the opposing candidates was that the Congress had won its way by exploiting Gandhi's name, by exhibiting his photograph and by asserting that they had his sanction. Thus even in this stage of the national struggle from his retirement Gandhi dominated the scene.

The Congress won an overwhelming victory at elections and out of it grew the problem whether to take office under the new Act or to play a destructive rôle within the legislatures. Both Nehru and Subhas Bose were against office acceptance and in favour of taking up a destructive position. The Congress was in two minds regarding this proposal. Gandhi's advice was sought, and he had that unerring feeling of the pulse of the people that makes leaders of men. He realised that the people were tired—for years they had just fought and struggled and therefore now they needed a few years of rest to recoup their strength mentally and morally. It was necessary to turn their energies into constructive channels. He, therefore, advised that the Congress accept office, enter the legislature, try to work the new Act and thereby prove the utter inadequacy of the reforms. As usual his voice carried the necessary weight, and there began the parliamentary days of the Congress—the only regime whereby India has during modern times benefited to some extent. Let it not be imagined that Gandhi had any illusions whatever regarding the efficacy of the new Act, for he in unequivocal terms classed it as ". . . a highly organised military control. . . . The Ministers are mere puppets as far as real control is concerned. . . . Hence it is that I have suggested that the Congress has entered upon office not to work the Act in the manner expected by the framers, but in a manner so as to hasten the day of substituting it by a genuine Act of India's own making." The principle behind it was that every gesture of Britain's had been tried, tested and found wanting. It was no question of compromise but one of astute policy.

The parliamentary days of the Congress came to an abrupt stop in November 1939. War was declared in September. Prior to this had seen the outlawing of Subhas Bose in early 1939 after the Tripuri sessions of

the Congress on account of his Fascist tendencies. This action inspired by Gandhi was deplored by the younger and more progressive groups as proof of Right Wing dictatorship. Few apart from Gandhi had been aware of Subhas's Fascist affiliations, and it was to preserve the Congress from falling into his hands and becoming an instrument of Fascist operations in alliance with Japan that Gandhi even at that distant date dealt with him in what was termed "a high-handed fashion," thereby preventing the development of nationwide fifth column activity. When war was announced abruptly without reference to the India Government it bore out fully Gandhi's reading of the so-called reforms of 1935. It was a challenge to the Congress to either accept India's subordinate position, compromise their ideas of non-violence or leave office to vindicate their honour. Overnight the good that had been done during this period of comparative peace was undone, and again acting on the advice of Gandhi the ministries left office, but not without an effort at compromise by asking Britain to declare her war aims. On September 15th the Indian National Congress reiterated its opposition to Nazism and Fascism in a resolution but demanded that:

"If the war is to defend the status quo, Imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privileges then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however the issue is democracy then India is intensely interested. . . A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression . . . The Working Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and Imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of Imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation . . .

whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people?"

There was no threat and a definite desire for co-operation in the wording of the resolution, but it received instead an unsatisfactory reception whereby Lord Linlithgow declared that the explicit declaration of war aims would be premature and unwise. Thus there was no other way left for the Congress but to interpret this as Britain having no intention of loosening her Imperialist claws from India, and led to the resignation of the Congress Ministries. In these determined efforts at co-operation Gandhi took a leading part going up to Simla to interview the Viceroy and trying to convince him of the goodwill of Indians and their determination to fight as a free nation beside Britain. But even his personal appeal had no better response. This is his own description of the abortive attempt at co-operation:—

"I knew that I had no instructions whatsoever from the Working Committee in the matter. I had answered a telegraphic invitation (from the Viceroy) and taken the first train I could catch. And what is more with my irresistible and out and out non-violence I knew that I could not represent the national mind and I should cut a very sorry figure if I tried to do so. I told His Excellency as much. Therefore there could be no question of any understanding or negotiation with me. Nor, I saw, had he sent for me to negotiate. I have returned from the Viceregal Lodge empty handed and without any understanding, open or secret."

The next stage in India opened with an offer from the Congress after the fall of France in 1940 to co-operate with Britain on the recognition of Indian independence and the formation of a provisional representative national government commanding the confidence of the people, and under these circumstances the Congress was fully prepared to organise the defence of India against Fascist

aggression. This offer is important from another angle—the repudiation of non-violence by a majority of over two-thirds of those present at the A. I. C. C. meeting in Poona. This was the first time that the Congress had shown its tendencies to break away from Gandhi's doctrine in the face of outside danger. It was prepared to rally and conscript India for the country's defence. But this too was met with the abortive August offer from the Viceroy which conceded nothing and invited co-operation in an advisory capacity. The tragedy was complete, and British bureaucracy was plunging into the hands of Japan, waiting to strike. The Congress had been prepared to repudiate the leadership of Gandhi after more than 20 years for what was considered the better way but no use was made of it by those in power.

While the Congress was contemplating wartime preparations Gandhi did not stop elucidating his theories of pacifism—that the ways of non-violence were not cowardly rather were they heroic, that it implied a height of moral courage difficult to attain. He also wrote regularly in the *Harijan* appealing to the European nations from the aggressors to their victims. His severe criticism of Germany in the matter of Jew-baiting had infuriated the Germans who considered this as detrimental to Indo-German relations and cried that those outside Germany should not pass censure on internal affairs. "I should rank myself a coward if for fear of my country or myself or Indo-German relations being harmed, I hesitated to give what I felt in the innermost recesses of my heart to be cent per cent sound advice," said Gandhiji in reply. To the Czechs he appealed to have recourse to passive resistance, to non-co-operate with the Hitlerite authorities by non-violent methods. People scoffed at the impractical suggestions of a visionary—yet later the leaders of occupied countries from their exiles in England and elsewhere advised the people against sporadic armed revolt as it must

inevitably mean suppression and the annihilation of the flower of European youth. They were counselled rather not to co-operate with the Germans, give them no help and seek to hinder their progress. This has a familiar touch about it, and while springing from no conviction or love for passive resistance, it speaks for its efficacy when applied to occupied territories. "If I were a Czech . . . I would not be a vassal to any nation or body. I must have absolute independence. To seek to win in a clash of arms would be pure bravado. Not so if in defying the might of one who would deprive me of my independence I refuse to obey his will and perish unarmed in the attempt. In so doing, though I lose the body, I save my soul, *i.e.*, my honour," said Gandhi apropos Chamberlain's Munich Agreement, which he called "peace without honour." Gandhiji was accused of giving advice of passive resistance only to the small nations—what of the Great Powers such as Britain and America? When he wrote of the Czechs there had been no occasion to offer such advice either to Britain or America, but later he wrote an article entitled "To Every Briton", which created terrific feeling against him for his counsel of passive resistance. This is not unnatural because Britain's power is through force—Imperialism is curiously allied to Fascism. But these same people hailed Chamberlain as the "Ambassador of Peace" when he sold out Czechoslovakia and incidentally betrayed the British people into a position it took them some time to recover; yet Gandhi's advice stirred up a storm of brutal patriotism giving false interpretations to what he had had the courage to say. Whether it would have worked or failed is immaterial for the apostles of violence can no more see the strength of non-violent non-co-operation than the passive resister can see any heroism in brute force. But some tribute should have been paid to Gandhiji for his sincerity since he was not seeking to apply a method which he had not tried out in his own country

and was prepared still to apply. However the wolves tore at him limb for limb for his futile and sterile ideas; the papers dubbed him senile. In September 1939 he also made an appeal to Hitler—it was the butt of many a joke from Europeans and British papers but it was curiously Gandhian and noble, as noble as when the soldiers crowned Christ with thorns and hailed him as King of the Jews. The declaration of war between England and Germany had truly disturbed him, and he felt keenly the horrors of war to which England would be subjected. This was his reason for addressing Hitler: “It is quite clear that you are today the one person in the world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to the savage state. Must you pay that price for an object however worthy it may appear to you to be?”

After the Viceroy made his phoney “August offer,” the Congress once again turned to Gandhiji for leadership, and was prepared to go back to the days of passive resistance by non-violent methods. Gandhiji announced his intention of not wishing to embarrass the British Government by a mass civil disobedience movement, and indulged in what he called individual *satyagraha* whereby only those whom he deemed able to keep the non-violence pledge were allowed to participate in the movement. This created to some extent confusion and disappointment in the general ranks of Congress workers who had been prepared for decisive action. Those were troublous days when every nationalist longed for action and not being one of the chosen, found it difficult to keep faith in inaction. Jawaharlal Nehru made a remark in October 1940 which to a large extent sums up his attitude and that of other Congressmen towards Gandhi’s leadership—an attitude which at times has seemed irrational:—“It is perfectly true that Gandhiji is very disturbing occasionally. There is no question of blind faith, so far as I am concerned or many others. We consider all the factors and in the

balance come to a conclusion. It is not enough to be just logical; one has to be or try to be effective in action, and that involves all manner of considerations, including the reaction of the masses."

The first of Gandhi's chosen few was Vinoba Bhave, little known yet one of his trusted lieutenants, and his arrest was followed by extensive arrests all over India—the figure rising to 20,000, including well-known Socialist and Communist leaders, 398 members of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies, 31 ex-Ministers and 22 members of the Central Legislature. The outstanding arrest was that of Nehru on a sentence of four years. This stunned the people of India. Gandhi was not arrested. He was left to direct operations. The British Government obviously apprehended the individual civil disobedience campaign little and felt able to cope with it. The deadlock was complete, and satisfactory from the point of view of the Government.

The aggression upon Soviet Russia opened a new avenue of approach out of actual sympathy for the Russian people and this feeling was widespread. The latter half of 1941 was fraught with possibilities. The entire country was roused to a feeling of co-operation and the angle of viewing the war as an Imperialist adventure was changed. By December 1941, it seemed as if the Government too were going to take advantage of this and had taken the initiative by the release of the principal leaders including Nehru. Once more the principle of non-violence was at stake. Some sections bitterly disapproved of any co-operation with the British Government, and Mr. Churchill's assertion that the Atlantic Charter did not apply to India aggravated this feeling. But Nehru and Azad with a majority support were carrying the day in the Congress on the release of a new spirit to meet the rising situation. India was ready to co-operate, to the extent of relieving Gandhiji of his leadership by the resolution passed at Bardoli in December 1941, which declared for "armed re-

sistance to the Axis as an ally of the United Nations provided India could mobilise under a National Government." Even Vallabhai Patel, veteran companion of Gandhi in his non-violent struggles, subscribed to this. Once more Gandhiji retired into the background with his non-violent ideals, while the country prepared to meet Britain in her wartime struggles. China, America and Australia each in their turn strove to do their bit in smoothing over the situation, and so hopeful was the outlook that with a little understanding and sense of reality on the part of Britain much that happened later could have been avoided.

Japan entered the war in 1941 with her attack on Pearl Harbour, on March 8th Rangoon fell having been preceded by Singapore showing the singular inefficacy of Imperialist economy. India stood menaced.

In February 1942 the Chiang-kai-Sheks came to India, and tried their utmost to cement Indo-British understanding. They came to Calcutta and met Gandhiji at the Birla residence, and with Madame acting as interpreter, he was able to discuss the political situation with Chiang-kai-Shek. He told them that he was particularly impressed with the strides China had made in cottage industries, and in spite of having lost their heavy industries, he was struck by the way they had been carrying on during these long years of war. He presented his spinning wheel to Madame and the yarn he had spun while speaking to them to the Generalissimo. The Chiang-kai-Sheks' visit created a healthy political atmosphere, but as it will be seen, this was not allowed to develop.

After the fall of Rangoon there was general panic not in India alone but also in Britain and on March 11th it was announced that Sir Stafford Cripps would be the bearer of terms of settlement between India and Britain. He arrived in India on March 23rd. Why he consented to be the bearer of the farcical offer (which according to Prof. R. Coupland, the spokesman of Imperialism, "in principle, in

fact, the Draft Declaration went no further than the August offer') will remain one of the mysteries of this war, and why he followed the path of calumny and untruth later is also incomprehensible. A statesman of Cripps' standing must have known that no self-respecting nation could accept the vague terms he brought to them, and yet he alleged that he had come out as a friend to India, or perhaps he hoped that his personal relationships with Nehru and the Congress would influence their decisions. Louis Fischer's interpretation is that "Cripps was bitched in the back" by Whitehall. The tragic proposals created more trouble and stirred up more bitterness than anything ever before. Before examining the Draft Declaration and discussing the causes and effects of its failure it is necessary to realise that not one political party in India was prepared to accept them as they stood.

The proposals put forward before the Congress leaders were mainly on a post-war basis—Gandhi called it a "post-dated cheque" on a bank that had little credit with the people of India and as such most unreliable. They were:—

#### I. POST-WAR:

- (a) Dominion Status for a "new Indian Union".
- (b) A "Constitution-making body" to be set up immediately after the war, partly elected by the membership of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies to be elected after the war, on a basis of proportional representation and partly nominated by the Princes in proportion to their States, to frame a new Constitution for India.
- (c) Right of any Province of British India to remain outside and either continue on the present basis or frame a new Constitution as a separate dominion.

- (d) Treaty between Britain and the "Constitution-making body" to "make provision in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities."
2. IMMEDIATE PROPOSALS DURING THE WAR.
- Retention of power by Britain with consultative co-operation of Indian representatives.

(R. Palme Dutt, *Guide to the Problem of India*)

Gandhi was again called out of his retirement in Wardha to examine the contents, and together with the Congress Working Committee he began a scrutiny of the offer. There is a general wrongful impression in certain circles in England and America that he was solely responsible for the rejection of the offer, but this is quite untrue. Since his verdict on examination concided with the rest of his colleagues—that though heavily built up by the Press in Great Britain and the Anglo-Indian Press in India, the proposals were completely phoney, being merely an amplified edition of the Viceroy's August offer. Cripps however had informed them that he had the goods to deliver and powers to effect changes, provided a compromise could be reached—but actually he had no power to offer a war-time national government to rally the people for the defence of India and that was the crux of the breakdown of the negotiations. And when both Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders revealed this in the Press, Cripps did not deny the truth, though he behaved peculiarly in trying to put the Congress leaders to blame for the failure of his mission. Once he had called himself their friend! Mystery remains as to what Cripps' instructions from Whitehall were—was he as powerless as he proved to be? Or had certain powers, to be used at his discretion, been conferred on him? Was he "bitched in the back" by Whitehall or by the bureaucracy in India? The wires

between Delhi and Whitehall were reported to be in constant use by the Viceroy and Sir Reginald Maxwell at the India end, the present Viceroy Lord Wavell not failing to add his quota in refusing to have an Indian Minister of War for such purposes as conscription etc., even though the conduct of war, it was agreed, should remain in his hands.

While Gandhi differed with his colleagues on the point of violence and non-violence, and on certain minor concessions, and the Congress Working Committee was in a mood to make more concessions than it ever had for the sake of India's defence, on the main point, *i.e.*, no offer of independence and national government during the war, they were all of the same opinion. Nobody quarrelled very much with the post-war schemes, but it was on account of the immediate proposal of retention of power by Britain that the offer was unanimously rejected. Nehru remarked at this stage, somewhat bitterly, that all the power Indians were to get would be to run canteens and print note paper. This was not good enough to organise an effective defence of the country. Gandhi had an interview with Stafford Cripps and it was held in the utmost friendliness, dietetics coming in for primary discussion. Cripps was evidently a fruitarian and therefore had something in common with Gandhi. But agreement in these small matters had little influence on their major discussion, when Gandhi laughingly told him that he had left much of India's foreign policy to Jawaharlal who understood it much better, being more English than Indian in his ideas. It was found that including Gandhi, one and all of the Congress leaders had come to the decision that without the formation of a national government, it was impossible to deal with the war situation effectively. The negotiations fell through, in fact they were turned down by every party in India—the only group willing to co-operate was M. N. Roy's small party of no consequence.

whatever who have since served as the agents of British Government in dealing with war propaganda, it being revealed recently that Rs. 13,000 per month was being paid to the Royists for helping in the anti-Congress, anti-Gandhi and war propaganda which has been put out by the Government during the last two years. It is significant that Gandhi, Nehru, Azad and other leaders said that if a real national government were formed, they were prepared to work with any party to whom the British Government would be prepared to entrust it.

Cripps left for England on April 11th after indulging in recriminations on the Congress leaders and leaving little goodwill behind. The breakdown was complete, and a feeling of frustration and bitter hostility was the natural reaction after the country had been keyed up to expect action in respect of enemy threats to the country. The failure of the Cripps Mission was the creation of fresh ill-will and counter-propaganda on the Congress. But let us examine what might have been the results had the Proposals been accepted and the Congress had decided to act in "consultative co-operation". They would have been as ineffectual and futile as the present Viceroy's Eleven, (which one cannot associate with tried leaders of nationalism), and thus been discredited by the people, or they would have had to resign like the Ministries and found themselves exactly where they are to-day. The tragedy is this that their rejection of the Cripps' offer has facilitated Britain's task of speeding anti-Congress propaganda throughout the world, trying to alienate world opinion from India's rightful case. By her cunning Imperialist methods, Britain has succeeded in preserving her Empire; under a halo of unctuous magnanimity she continues her exploitation and has set the stage for continuing it in the years to come. The Cripps Offer was a bold stroke of duplicity.

## *C H A P T E R XI*

### QUIT INDIA

THIS slogan, the title of one of Gandhi's articles in the *Harijan*, has become familiar and to some extent notorious. It was found scrawled on the gates of European residential houses, on the walls of European business firms, it was used by the fifth column for propaganda and by frustrated patriots in disgust. It represents the bitterness and frustration which has fallen like a cloud upon the Indian people. The purport of this article has been distorted, fragmentised and taken out of context to give to it a meaning which Gandhiji did not imply. When he wrote he meant it to apply to British vested interests and state control, but it was interpreted to mean that he wanted the armed forces cleared out of India so that he could sell out to Japan. It is reported that he had arguments with Nehru and others and held that for a non-violent resistance soldiers were not necessary but had to admit that under the present state of affairs it was not possible to be successful without armed assistance. Thus he amplified the meaning of "Quit India" by saying that he did not make it applicable to whatever was necessary in wartime and certainly not to the foreign armed forces. But, alas, bureaucracy was out for his blood, out to make him pro-Japanese—ethically this is true for Gandhiji is not anti-anybody, he does not believe that any person least of all any nation is wholly irredeemable. His politics are not opportunism that to-day's enemy is to-morrow's bed fellow through sheer emergency not conviction. His non-violence is naturally and sincerely opposed to Japan's militarism, and as far back as December 1938, during the period when Britain was still wooing Japan by supplying scrap iron and closing the Burma Road etc., he said in

stern terms to Mr. Takaoka, a member of the Japanese Parliament, on being questioned by him, that unity between India and Japan was only possible when "Japan ceases to throw its greedy eyes on India. . . You have copied the rulers of India in their methods of exploitation and gone even one better. . . There is no basis for that friendship to-day . . . no one comes here to give us the good things of Japan. You believe only in dumping your goods on us. How can I take a single yard of Japanese cloth however fine and artistic it may be? It is as poison to us for it means starvation for the poor people of India."

Gandhiji said this at a time when Japanese silk was coming into India at a protective tariff to compete with Indian silk. It is common knowledge to-day that sweated labour produces the beautiful fabrics of Japan, and therefore if Indian silk had to compete with these protected as they were by favourable tariff duties one would have to starve the peasants and silk-growers of India for it. If the Government had not been so anxious to propitiate Japan the correct procedure from the trade and moral point of view would have been an embargo on Japanese goods. To-day because Britain is at war with Japan, the cheap, shoddy stuffs have ceased to pour in and the people of India find that they can quite easily do without them—in peace time this might have meant improvement in silk growing, production and condition of the peasants. The "poison" which Gandhiji deplored the British Government had no hesitation in facilitating its pouring into the country.

Mr. Takaoka also requested Gandhiji to give him a message for the new party in Japan that stands for Asia for the Asiatics. This is what Gandhiji said: "I do not subscribe to the doctrine of Asia for the Asiatics, if it is meant as an anti-European combination. How can we have Asia for the Asiatics unless we are content to let Asia remain a frog in the well? But Asia cannot afford to

remain a frog in the well. It has a message for the whole world, if it will only live up to it. There is the imprint of Buddhistic influence in the whole of Asia, which includes India, China, Japan, Burma, Ceylon and the Malay States. I said to the Burmese and the Ceylonese that they were Buddhist only in name; India was Buddhist in reality.\* I would say the same thing to China and Japan. But, for Asia to be not for Asia but the whole world, it has to relearn the message of Buddha and deliver it to the world. To-day it is being denied everywhere. In Burma every Buddhist monk is being dreaded by the Muslims. But why should anyone who is a true Buddhist be dreaded by anyone? You will therefore see that I have no message to give you but this that you must be true to your ancient heritage. The message is 2500 years old,† but it has not yet been truly lived. . .”

Gandhiji's life has shown him to be the most tolerant of individuals and politicians, who does not want an “Asia for the Asiatics” but who does want exploitation by the European nations to cease. He believes in reality in the theory that there is room for all of us without the strong preying on the weak. Therefore when one realises that this man who has no desire for a great continent to live “a frog in the well” existence, would least of all prescribe it for India, which is but a fragment of it—what does he mean by Quit India? It shows one thing that he has travelled a long way since the days when he believed in the British Empire as an institution for the good of the people—a belief he has freely acknowledged in his autobiography—and that he has after years of experimenting and making allowances come to the conclusion

\**Ahimsa* or non-violence is the keynote of Buddhism, and Gandhiji means that India having actually adopted it in her national life and struggles is truly Buddhist.

†Message of Buddha.

that for the exploitation of India to end, the British must go. As a slogan it echoes in the heart of every Indian—it is the outcome of a satiation and the futility of the British connection.

After the breakdown of Cripps' negotiations there was a general feeling of confusion and conflict amongst all nationalist sections. The Congress felt that some offensive action was necessary—yet what was there to be done? Japan was rushing from one victory to another, Subhas Bose's followers were making good capital out of the rejection of the Cripps proposals—and this approbation from Fascist camps served the anti-Fascist Congress an ill turn since it afforded imperialism the materials for anti-propaganda which it needed. Britain or rather the bureaucracy in India and Whitehall were adamant that nothing could be done since the "magnanimous offer" put out by them had been thrust aside, and this was the beginning of a series of persistent efforts to blacken the Congress and Gandhi in the eyes of the world. Militant anti-Fascist leaders such as Nehru and Azad found all their efforts at co-operation frustrated, and it forced them gradually to turn to non-co-operation as the one weapon whereby freedom for India might be achieved and the nation rallied together for its defence. Inevitably, as so many times they had done since 1919, the Congress turned to Gandhi for leadership once again. The situation was tragic since people like Nehru who had contemplated guerilla warfare and scorched earth in stopping the Japanese progress, finding a dead end, gave way to Gandhi's programme of non-violent resistance to Japan whereby the very programme he had chalked out for the Czech resistance he put before the Indian people, non-co-operation with the British Government but a moral sympathy with the Allied cause and condemnation of Fascism. The All-India Congress Committee met at Allahabad to discuss ways and means before actually call-

ing upon Gandhiji to take the leadership. Here Rajagopalachariar put forward a scheme of a united front with the Muslim League even on the basis of Pakistan, but this was violently opposed, primarily by Gandhi abhorring the idea of an "Ulster" in India. While Rajagopalachariar was moved by the urgency of the situation to this concession, Gandhiji quite rightly felt it would be the end to all hope of real unity if India was divided into fragments. Perhaps the voice of opportunism should have whispered to him that it was justified as an expediency; unfortunately his sincerity and conviction stood in the way. This resolution supported by the Communists was lost by a vast majority of opinion, and soon afterwards Rajagopalachariar left the Congress on account of a statement he published advocating the recognition of Pakistan. Gandhiji informed him that since officially the Congress had turned it down, and Rajaji was so actively and intimately connected with the Congress that his utterances would be taken as official. Therefore the only course left for him was that of either retracting his statement or leaving the Congress. Rajagopalachariar chose the latter for he felt that the necessity of the moment justified concessions for a united front in foiling the objective of imperialism. Thus the Congress lost one of its stalwarts, yet did not lose him in this that while differing from the High Command he remained faithful and true to its ideals. Rajagopalachariar was no apostate—it cost him a tremendous effort to differ from Gandhi whom he loved and revered as he did no other man and to cut himself off from the Congress. But imperialism was unable to utilise this step for its own ends, since Rajagopalachariar put out statement after statement clarifying the situation so that no other motive could be imputed to his action. The gulf was widening and imperialism was trying to isolate the Congress from all sections. Fifth-column propaganda grew in intensity and the Working Committee watched in

alarm the rapid spread of bitterness and hostility towards Britain.

Gandhiji was finally appointed to the leadership of the Congress, and he told them sternly that he expected the utmost discipline from those who chose to follow him. British propaganda was daily fed with Gandhiji's pacifist utterances, his writings torn out of context and misinterpreted and he was represented as the tool of Japan. Upon this principle developed the calumny of the Congress throughout the length and breadth of the world, and those of us who knew what the real truth was stood aghast at the gullibility of fairly intelligent people. America with all her much flaunted friendship for the cause of freedom found few people to champion India's case—of the men in the public eye it was only Willkie who dared to challenge Britain's imperialistic aim and assert that the acid test of Britain's motives would be freedom for India. But a wave of bitterness swept over the people, and even patriots could not view the situation as clearly as they might have if it had been possible to be objective. Thus on August 7th, 1942, after conferring full powers on Gandhiji, the following resolution was passed, with only the representatives of the Communist Party dissenting, since they felt that a mass civil disobedience at this stage would only make Japan's way easier and would be playing into imperialism's hands:

"The All-India Congress Committee has given the most careful consideration to the reference made to it by the Working Committee in their resolution dated July 14, 1942, and to subsequent events, including the development of the war situation, the utterances of responsible spokesmen of the British Government, and the comments and criticisms made in India and abroad. The Committee approves of and endorses that resolution and is of opinion that events subsequent to it have given it further justification and have made it clear that the immediate ending of

British rule in India is an urgent necessity, both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom.

"The committee has viewed with dismay the deterioration of the situation on the Russian and Chinese fronts and conveys to the Russian and Chinese peoples its high appreciation of their heroism in defence of their freedom. This increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who sympathize with the victims of aggression, to examine the foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied Nations, which have led to repeated and disastrous failure. It is not by adhering to such aims and policies and methods that failure can be converted into success, for past experience has shown that failure is inherent in them. These policies have been based not on freedom so much as on the domination of subject and colonial countries, and the continuation of the imperialist tradition and method. The possession of Empire, instead of adding to the strength of the ruling power, has become a burden and a curse to India, the classic land of modern imperialism, has become the crux of the question, for by the freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations be judged, and the peoples of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm.

"The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depends the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India will assure this success by throwing all her great resources in the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism. This will not only affect materially the fortunes of the war, but will bring all subject and oppressed humanity on the side of the United Nations, and give these nations whose ally

India would be, the moral and spiritual leadership of the world.

"The peril of to-day, therefore, necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British domination. *No future promises or guarantees can affect the present situation or meet the peril. They cannot produce the needed psychological effect on the mind of the masses.*

"The A. I. C. C. therefore repeats with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British power from India. On the declaration of India's independence, a provisional Government will be formed and free India will become an ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise of the struggle for freedom. The provisional Government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country. It will thus be a composite government representative of all important sections of the people of India. Its primary functions must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command, together with its Allied powers, and to promote the well-being and progress of the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere, to whom essentially all power and authority must belong.

"The provisional Government will evolve a scheme for a constituent assembly which will prepare a constitution for the Government of India acceptable to all sections of the people. This constitution, according to the Congress view, should be a federal one, with the largest measure of autonomy for the federating units, and with the residuary powers vesting in these units. The future relations between India and the Allied Nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage and for their co-operation in the common task of resisting aggression. Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it.

"The freedom of India must be the symbol of, and prelude to, this freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination. Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Dutch East Indies, Iran and Iraq must also attain their complete freedom. It must be clearly understood that such of these countries as are under Japanese control now must not subsequently be placed under the rule of control of any other colonial Power.

"While the A.-I. C. C. must primarily be concerned with independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a world federation of free nations and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved. An independent India would gladly join such a world federation and co-operate on an equal basis with other countries in the solution of international problems.

"Such a federation should be open to all nations who agree with its fundamental principles. In view of the war however, the federation must inevitably begin with be confined to the United Nations. Such a step taken now will have a most powerful effect on the war, on the peoples of the Axis countries, and on the peace to come.

"The Committee regretfully realizes, however, that despite the tragic and overwhelming lessons of the war and the perils that overhang the world, the Governments of few countries are yet prepared to take this inevitable step towards world federation. The reactions of the British Government and the misguided criticisms of the foreign Press also make it clear that even the obvious demand for India's independence is resisted, though this has been made essentially to meet the present peril and to enable India to defend herself and help China and Russia in their hour of need. The Committee is anxious not to embarrass in any way the defence of China or Russia, whose

freedom is precious and must be preserved, or to jeopardize the defensive capacity of the United Nations.

"The earnest appeal of the Working Committee to Great Britain and the United Nations has so far met with no response, and the criticisms made in many foreign quarters have shown an ignorance of India's and the world's need, and sometimes even hostility to India's freedom, which is significant of a mentality of domination and racial superiority which cannot be tolerated by a proud people conscious of their strength and of the justice of their cause.

"The A.-I. C. C. would yet again, at this last moment, in the interest of world freedom, renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations. But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian Government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilize all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last 22 years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhi and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

"The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endurance and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji, and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom. They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and

when no Congress committees can function. When this happens, every man and woman, who is participating in this movement, must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India.

"Lastly, whilst the A.-I. C. C. has stated its own view of the future governance under free India, the A.-I. C. C. wishes to make it quite clear to all concerned that by embarking on mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India."

It will be seen that this resolution reiterated the anti-Fascist attitude of the Congress and its willingness to organise armed resistance on the recognition of India as a free ally, and once again put forward her claim to mobilisation under a national government. Gandhiji, ever temperate, was to undertake negotiations for a settlement, failing which a mass civil disobedience movement was to be launched. With this end in view he wrote to the Viceroy asking for an interview—but the reply was the arrest of Gandhi and all the Congress leaders on August 9th. Instead of a united front before the common enemy the rift was complete, and absolute reaction set in on all sides. Gandhi had also written a letter to Chiang-kai-Shek, reaffirming India's concern over China and friendship with her while deplored the necessity of the step which he contemplated. For some time this letter was suppressed by the British Government, with only one object one imagines, that of alienating China's sympathy from India. But as the precaution of releasing it to the Press had been taken—it was published in some local papers: It said:—

"Dear Generalissimo,

I can never forget the five hours' close contact I had with you and your noble wife in Calcutta. I had always felt drawn towards you in your fight for freedom, and that contact and our conversation brought China and her problems still nearer to me. Long ago, between 1905 and 1918, when I was in South Africa, I was in constant touch with the small Chinese colony in Johannesburg. I knew them first as clients and then as comrades in the Indian passive resistance struggle in South Africa. I came in touch with them in Mauritius also. I learnt then to admire their thrift, industry, resourcefulness and internal unity. Later in India I had a very fine Chinese friend living with me for a few years and we all learnt to like him.

I have thus felt greatly attracted towards your great country and, in common with my countrymen, our sympathy has gone out to you in your terrible struggle. Our mutual friend, Jawaharlal Nehru, whose love of China is only excelled, if at all, by his love of his own country, has kept us in intimate touch with the developments of the Chinese struggle.

Because of this feeling I have towards China and my earnest desire that our two great countries should come closer to one another and co-operate to their mutual advantage, I am anxious to explain to you that my appeal to the British Power to withdraw from India is not meant in any shape or form to weaken India's defence, against the Japanese or embarrass you in your struggle. India must not submit to any aggressor or invader and must resist him. I would not be guilty of purchasing the freedom of my country at the cost of your country's freedom. That problem does not arise before me as I am clear that India cannot gain her freedom in this way, and a Japanese domination of either India or China would be equally injurious to the other country and to world peace. That domina-

tion must, therefore, be prevented, and I should like India to play her natural and rightful part in this.

I feel India cannot do so while she is in bondage. India has been a helpless witness of the withdrawals from Malaya, Singapore and Burma. We must learn the lesson from these tragic events and prevent by all means at our disposal a repetition of what befell these unfortunate countries. But unless we are free, we can do nothing to prevent it, and the same process might well occur again, crippling India and China disastrously. I do not want a repetition of this tragic tale of woe.

Our proffered help has repeatedly been rejected by the British Government, and the recent failure of the Cripps Mission has left a deep wound which is still running. Out of that anguish has come the cry for immediate withdrawal of British Power so that India can look after herself and help China to the best of her ability.

I have told you of my faith in non-violence and of my belief in the effectiveness of this method if the whole nation could turn to it. That faith in it is as firm as ever. But I realise that India today as a whole has not that faith and belief, and the Government in free India would be formed from the various elements composing the nation.

Today the whole of India is impotent and feels frustrated. The Indian Army consists largely of people who have joined up because of economic pressure. They have no feeling of a cause to fight for, and in no sense are they a national army. Those of us who could fight for a cause, for India and China, with armed forces or with non-violence, cannot, under the foreign heel, function as they want to. And yet our people know for certain that India free can play even a decisive part not only on her own behalf, but also on behalf of China and world peace. Many, like me, feel that it is not proper or manly to remain in the helpless state and allow events to overwhelm us when a way to effective action can be open to

us. They feel, therefore, that every possible effort should be made to ensure independence and that freedom of action which is so urgently needed. This is the origin of my appeal to the British Power to end immediately the unnatural connection between Britain and India.

Unless we make that effort, there is grave danger of public feeling in India going into wrong and harmful channels. There is every likelihood of subterranean sympathy for Japan growing simply in order to weaken and oust British authority in India. This feeling may take the place of robust confidence in our ability never to look to outsiders for help in winning our freedom. We have to learn self-reliance and develop the strength to work out our own salvation. This is only possible if we make a determined effort to free ourselves from bondage. That freedom has become a present necessity to enable us to take our due place among the free nations of the world.

To make it perfectly clear that we want to prevent in every way Japanese aggression, I would personally agree, and I am sure the Government of Free India would agree, that the Allied powers might, under treaty with us, keep their armed forces in India and use the country as a base for operations against the threatened Japanese attack.

I need hardly give you my assurance that, as the author of the new move in India, I shall take no hasty action. And whatever action I may recommend will be governed by the consideration that it should not injure China, or encourage Japanese aggression in India or China. I am trying to enlist world opinion in favour of a proposition which to me appears self-proved and which must lead to the strengthening of India's and China's defence. I am also educating public opinion in India and conferring with my colleagues. Needless to say, any movement against the British Government with which I may be connected will be essentially non-violent. I am

straining every nerve to avoid a conflict with British authority. But if in the vindication of the freedom, which has become an immediate desideratum, this becomes inevitable, I shall not hesitate to run any risk, however great.

Very soon you shall have completed five years of war against Japanese aggression and invasion and all the sorrow and misery that these have brought to China. My heart goes out to the people of China in deep sympathy and in admiration for their heroic struggle and endless sacrifices in the cause of their country's freedom and integrity against tremendous odds. I am convinced that this heroism and sacrifice cannot be in vain ; they must bear fruit. To you, to Madame Chiang and to the great people of China, I send my earnest and sincere wishes of your success. I look forward to the day when a free India and a free China will co-operate together in friendship and brotherhood for their own good and for the good of Asia and the world.

In anticipation of your permission, I am taking the liberty of publishing this letter in the *Harijan*.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. GANDHI."

What was it that caused the nationalist movement to follow Gandhi into the channels of non-co-operation ? It was certainly a personal triumph for him but apart from that it was the fact that great and sincere patriots like Nehru felt driven into this only course left to one. It was no question of narrow nationalism or a spirit of suicidal bravado, rather was it from a feeling of intense bitterness that filled all sections of Indian nationalist opinion. This increased with the arrest of the leaders, and the initiative passed into the hands of the fifth column movement. A great spirit of heroic defiance filled the people and patriots hurled themselves into an useless campaign of sabotage

and wreckage which had absolutely no sanction from the High Command, and was being initiated by fifth column activity. The very violence and mass rebellion Gandhiji had so deplored and sought to quell by replacing it with non-violence became the sum total of the movement he had planned. Thus leaderless, rudderless, the popular movement, which people like Nehru, Patel, Azad and others had anticipated to end in victory within a week, was led along undreamt of channels while bureaucracy pointed an accusing finger at the gaoled leaders. Lord Linlithgow, like General Dyer, was supposed to have saved India by his prompt action, and the fifth column claimed Gandhi and the Congress as their own and under the guise of nationalism, taking advantage of the frustrated confusion in the minds of nationalist patriots, it worked untold damage to the cause of India's freedom and the popular front against Japanese aggression. Every right of defence, all powers of speech were denied the leaders until they had eaten the humble pie and retracted the August resolution—thus they were put in the unique position of being accused but denied the minimum privilege of defence which is allotted even to criminals. Repression by Government coupled with the bitter hatred of the people led the situation to worsen step by step; from one stage it wallowed into another of utter despondency, humiliation and vengeance. Imperialism was satisfied, and Fascism just wanted its opportunity. The martyrdom of the people who were sacrificed, however mistakenly, to the cause of freedom will not be forgotten and some day their deeds will bear the fruit they so desired.

Even from his imprisonment in the Aga Khan Palace at Poona, where he had been joined by his wife, Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy deploring the acts of sabotage and savagery laid at the door of the Congress. They may have been by individual Congressmen, but the directions were not given officially by the Congress. These sporadic

acts of violence had no official sanction nor had he thought out any directions before he was imprisoned since he still had had hopes of successful negotiations with the Government. He later also wrote to Mr. Jinnah—the letter was not sent to him by the authorities—saying that he was fully agreeable to a settlement. It was only after his release that the contents of this letter reached Mr. Jinnah and was given out to the Press. Though Gandhiji continued to disclaim violence and regret all that had happened it had given such a fillip to anti-British feelings that people became blind to the other more terrible factor of Japanese aggression. The uncalled-for Fascist treatment by the Government in arresting the leaders for merely voicing their demands, out-Hitlering Hitler in not even allowing the time given for their ultimatum to elapse and the consequent brutal repression and shootings upon the people were more than sufficient to stir up such a hatred against Britain that the majority of people did not hesitate to remark “How much worse can Japan be?” In the meantime the British Government began the task of preparing the famous Tottenham pamphlets accusing Gandhi and the Congress of treating with the Japs, taking his and other speeches out of their context for deliberate misapprehension. These were published and widely circulated to show like Pontius Pilate where the blame lay—but the accused were given no opportunity to reply. One thing however was quite certain that the disorders and sabotage followed the arrests, not the other way about.

Imprisonment for Gandhi was this time punctuated by sorrows—early in prison he lost Mahadev Desai, who died suddenly of heart failure. Companions of long-standing, he and Gandhi had come far together down the cobbled path of years. For sometime he had been his faithful chronicler, his friend and almost a son. Mahadev had been with him from the Champaran days and there was no more devoted friend or colleague. His family and his

life had revolved round Gandhiji's first at Sabarmati Ashram and then at Sevagram, Wardha. To him Gandhiji used to confide many of his innermost thoughts and conflicts, and Mahadev as the proud possessor of these confidences never failed him. He was intolerant of all criticism of Gandhi or his philosophy—he believed in the man and his way of living. During the years of their companionship Mahadev Desai had woven himself into the scheme of Gandhi's life. In many ways he did more for him than his sons, and certainly took the place his eldest and unworthy son should have occupied. Mahadev, in spite of the simple ways he affected at Sevagram, was an aristocrat who had little time for the "dogs" that howled; he sat supremely serene as the "caravan" passed on. When Mahadev died a door in Gandhiji's innermost sanctum closed. With his belief in the will of God there was no rebellion or regret in his heart, just an overwhelming sorrow that Mahadev should have died in prison. But the whole of India is a prison to-day for Indians, and those who serve her best do so behind the bars. A blank there must have been in what had been daily contact for almost thirty years, but Gandhiji bore his sorrow like a saint.

This was not his last or severest trial—for after a prolonged illness during which time she refused to be parted from her husband Kasturba died. She, who had given herself so completely to him, so as to submerge herself in him and his mission, had become more than a wife to him. By her death he felt as if half of him had gone—the better half in reality, he said. Through all these years, when a veritable child she had married him and endured his passionate love and jealousies, her indomitable spirit had in no way been curbed even though she had disciplined it to the sternness of his philosophy. Her disappointment in her eldest child had been a matter of sorrow for both herself and her husband, but she was a happy woman when she died with her head pillowed on the lap of her

husband and her youngest child Devdas beside her. What more could a woman have desired? Over sixty years of married life, full to the brim with achievements, a husband who was world renowned and well beloved and now to be able to die hearing his voice reciting the Gita—no more could any woman desire. It was a fitting end to a noble life. While she lived she had worked in the shadow of his great personality unsung and unsought, but in death she drew a tear from every eye and left a void not only in him but in the whole country. Her name will live through the ages by means of the Kasturba Trust Fund for welfare work and education for women and children. But for Gandhiji arrived at the evening of his life this loss of Kasturba has been a tremendous upheaval; only his stoicism and his faith help him to shift his own burden and shoulder the burden of the nation. Never so far has "self" entered into count as against the services that have been required of him. Even now, he does not indulge in the luxury of grief; rather he sublimates it to his faith and moves on to the undertakings for which he is the guarantee.

The 21-day fast recorded earlier took place while he still had Kasturba with him to help him and minister to him, but it was a terrible physical exertion and when he came back out of the shadows of death his health was very much impaired. Then the shock of her death, his undemonstrated grief and his very submission to the will of God, that one by one the earthly barriers were breaking down, took a toll of his none too robust body. In May he was unconditionally released on grounds of health and was taken to Juhu on the outskirts of Bombay to recuperate away from the public eye. The Aga Khan's palace which had served as his prison had become for him hallowed ground, since there he had to leave behind the ashes of Mahadev and Kasturba—the two who had stood nearest to him. The newspapers said "He visited the memorials

to Mahadev Desai and Kasturba"—what a bald statement! How can it convey adequately his sentiments, his feelings and his grief? Ever since he devoted himself to the nation he has lost even the right of the humblest of individuals—the privacy of feelings. Even in his sorrow cameras click and tongues wag. But if the tears of his people compensate even slightly for it, these are his for the nation has mourned with him.

Gandhiji's release! It was like a breath of sea breeze into an atmosphere noxious with fumes. It brought hope and a feeling that perhaps something would happen—surely he will do something. The whole country sat up and took notice, waited and wished. It is undoubted that there is no leader of his magnitude, and only with his initiative can the nation be rallied. Therefore there was little hope that he would be left in peace at Juhu; in spite of the doctors' orders, people begged for *darshan*, politicians hurried thither to see if there was any way he could relieve the deadlock, and old friends such as Rajagopalachariar and Bhulabhai Desai to re-affirm their faith and love; Mr. Jayakar—ever a peacemaker with a lingering faith in British democracy—arrived for consultation; Sir H. P. Mody and N. R. Sarker who had resigned their seats in the Viceroy's Council at the time of his fast to reiterate their loyalty and perhaps hoping to receive a pat on the back. Quite suddenly Juhu became the cynosure of all eyes in India, where Gandhiji smiled, kept his days of silence, talked to everybody, while the people hoped and hoped. The evening prayers were crowded, people thronged from all over the place and it was useless to hope that the world could be kept away from Gandhiji.

In the meantime to the press was released some of the correspondence that had passed between Lord Wavell and Gandhiji, and between him and Sir Richard Tottenham which make interesting reading; especially Gandhiji's courtesy in answering Tottenham's churlishness. Lord

Wavell, while insisting upon the withdrawal of the "Quit India" resolution, emphasised Britain's imperialist rôle in clear terms as "We the British shall stand by the Indian soldier whom we have brought into being and trained for consolidating our rule and position in India, who by experience we have found can effectively help us in our wars against other nations. We shall stand by the Rulers of the Indian States, many of whom are our creation and all of whom owe their present position to us, even when these Rulers curb or actually crush the spirit of the people whom they rule. Similarly shall we stand by the minorities whom we too have encouraged and used against the vast majority when the latter have at all attempted to resist our rules. It makes no difference that the majority seek to replace it by a rule of the will of the people of India taken as a whole. And in no case will we transfer power unless Hindus and Muslims come to us with an agreement among themselves." Gandhiji rightly says that this attitude is the basis of the "Quit India" slogan which he feels is the sentiment of the man in the street in India. The rest of the correspondence is in a futile vein since the Viceroy no more desires to see the Indian point of view than his "burra sahibs" in London do. The country is flooded with Americans and British soldiers, and Indian assistance is not required in any greater measure than they are getting for the general policing of the frontiers—but had Japan launched a large scale invasion it would have been impossible for all the foreign troops to hold the country without the help of the Indian people. Another thing is this that had Britain had the fullest co-operation in India it would have been possible to invade Burma earlier in all seriousness and force the Japanese on the defensive. The delay in Britain's Burma operations is wholly dependent on America's action in the Pacific because she cannot count on the mobilised efforts of India as she might have done under a friendly national government. Then the British

soldier, who hates India, would not have been called out here for Indians would have been defending their home-land—if only they would realise that and also that until they can get rid of people like Wavell, Arnery and Churchill from having the final voice in Indian affairs nothing will change the “Quit India” feeling that smoulders in the heart of all true Indians with the exception of the shivering lackeys of British Imperialism, some of whom had no compunction in attaining notoriety through the arrest of the Congress leaders. The *London Illustrated News* produced a middle page spread of the eleven Viceroy's Councillors who had not the courage to resign their seats when Gandhi, Nehru, etc., were arrested on August 9th, but mutely acquiesced to the Viceroy's high-handed and fascist action, and the imprisoned leaders with a caption to the effect that these Indians had sent fellow Indians to prison.

Soon after his release Gandhi took up the work of writing a 78-page reply to the official pamphlet *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances in August 1942*, in the form of a booklet covering all correspondence between him, Lord Linlithgow and Lord Wavell to be published by the Government of India in a booklet of 125 pages. It is good that at last the accused will also get a hearing from the world, so long denied to them, but one fears that it will make little or no impression on the general attitude to India. Gandhi's letters and statements have throughout been gentle and considered utterly lacking in rancour, in contrast to the haughty replies he has received. Knowing very well of his and the Congress attitude towards violence since so often Gandhi had called off mass civil disobedience owing to such sporadic outbursts of violence, it is difficult, knowing that Jaiprakash Narain was so greatly responsible for much that occurred, to understand why he calls him a patriot. Where is the keen eyesight that recognised Fascism in Subhas Bose? Why does he not in a

similar way condemn the way of Jaiprakash as the way of ruin and selling out to Japanese imperialism? Is it due to a personal weakness for the man? Or because he believes that his misguided patriotism will some day see light? He was not slow in condemning Gopinath Saha in 1924 for his terrorist activities which reflected in spite of their sterile policy some personal bravery—why does he not exhibit the same severity towards the rôle Jaiprakash has followed? An attitude of censure towards people who had done what Jaiprakash set himself to do would have done much more to clarify his position than all his letters to Lord Wavell, because clearly he is not in favour of their deeds of violence and their plans of sabotage etc., were not envisaged by him or the Congress Working Committee in their plan of non-violent civil disobedience. Gandhiji, the votary of truth, has already said so, and therefore it would serve the purpose better if from his lips one had the sharp condemnation of not only those acts but of their authors as well. His analysis of the origin of the acts of violence is correct that "The Government action in enforcing India-wide arrests was so violent that the populace which was in sympathy with the Congress lost self-control;" and that "whatever violence was committed by the people whether Congressmen or others was therefore committed in spite of the leaders' wishes." But surely after asserting this it is also necessary that while deplored the methods of Imperialism in hounding them he should dissociate himself from the leaders of such movements instead of acclaiming their patriotism? Can it be that he does not wish to disown a party and its leader who stood by the August Resolution and did not sound a dissenting voice in spite of their having gone beyond what was intended by the Congress Working Committee? In a person of a smaller stature other and more abstruse motives might be imputed but not to Gandhiji. Hence the conflict and bewilderment in the minds of the people.

The sum total of the August Resolution, of which Gandhi was the principal mover, has been a victory for Imperialism, causing greater bitterness between the British and Indians and a breach in communal unity. A further strain on the country has been the suppression and declaring illegal of not only the Congress but all its affiliated organisations. In particular the suppression of the All-India Village Industries Association and All-India Spinners' Association has taken away the livelihood of a substantial section of the peasantry. In viewing the effect of last year's famine in Bengal, more than ever one feels that the need of the revival of the A.-I.V.I.A. and A.-I.S.A. is urgent. Thus what was to have been the first stage towards freedom has become a disaster of great magnitude in that it has resulted in an economic and political deadlock that breaks out into frustration and general deterioration in economic standards. Both the A.-I.V.I.A. and the A.-I.S.A. were doing excellent constructive work, and the peasants were getting a planned benefit in their off-seasons as they had never had before, but with the suppression of these two bodies there is no demand any more for their labour, many of their looms and *charkhas* having been confiscated. It was an action of the utmost unfairness to outlaw organisations that were obviously doing important and valuable work in rural reconstruction—but then it is not to the interest of Imperialism to allow the standard of living to be raised. An impoverished and starving peasantry means an unconscious and degenerating peasantry. Therefore Imperialism by these acts was just playing its actual rôle. But Gandhi above all should have anticipated these measures as the counterblast to the resolution—Imperialism was not going to sit quiet and watch its very roots menaced—and therefore the other alternative put forward by Rajagopalachariar, as a basis of unity in India, should perhaps have been exploited before contemplating this drastic step. The tragic significance of the August Reso-

lution became evil in achievements, leading to frustration in the national life and general downward economic pressure. Gandhiji being a searcher after truth has never hesitated to retract his mistakes, if he feels he has been at fault, and also to admit that his tactics in 1942 might have been different. He is still the "Generalissimo." We know him to be non-communal and anti-Fascist, therefore one sees that he has realised that to foil Imperialism we must play its own game. If Hindu-Muslim unity is the pretext on which freedom is withheld, it is worth while recognising Pakistan on the plan of self-determination and what may seem fragmentation may prove to be the pivot of unity. Anyway it will remove Britain's last stronghold of reaction. But because Gandhi is a searcher after truth, until he was convinced that Pakistan will not be the beginning of a new disunity, the rise of innumerable factions and cliques, it has been most difficult for him to agree to it. Often enough he has settled on a compromise with his enemies but out of conviction, not as a political stunt. Gandhiji is willing enough to revise the situation and begin the struggle for independence on a new scale. Upon his conviction and upon the readiness of the Muslim League to meet him half-way depends whether his plan will work. It is useless to expect him to resort to anything on mere strategical value; it is vitally necessary for him to be convinced that the proposition is for the ultimate and real good of India. He has come now to consider that the severance from Britain will be a good thing for India, but it has taken him a life-time to arrive at this conclusion and Pakistan is a far weightier problem and unsavoury to those who really love India and hold her unity dear. Yet if the price of independence is to be Pakistan, which way is one to turn?

Once more Gandhiji has shocked India and the world into sitting up and taking notice; once again he has produced an electrical effect by releasing to the press his re-

vised offers for a settlement of the deadlock. These are his terms:

1. He could do nothing without consulting the Congress Working Committee.
2. If he met the Viceroy he would tell him that he sought the interview with a view to help and not to hinder the Allied war effort.
3. He has no intention of offering civil disobedience. History can never be repeated and he cannot take the country back to 1942.
4. The world has moved on during the last two years. The whole situation has to be reviewed *de novo*.
5. To-day he would be satisfied with a National Government in full control of the civil administration.
6. Mr. Gandhi would advise Congress participation in the National Government if formed.
7. After independence was assured he would probably cease to function as adviser to Congress.

Gandhiji has said that while these terms cannot have the full sanction of the Congress behind them just now, were the Working Committee to be released, he would try his utmost to influence them to endorse his proposals. So far he has waited to consult them before issuing the statement but having been refused, he has had to do so on his own initiative. People of reaction are trading on the fact that this offer cannot be taken as having Congress support since the Congress leaders do not even know about it; that is true, but when Gandhiji was given the status of "Generalissimo" of the Congress, making peace terms were also conferred upon him, and unless the leaders are released how can they have any chance to raise their voices? Therefore instead of tightening the deadlock their united demand should be for the speedy release of the

Working Committee. The welter of feelings that these terms have churned up is remarkable. The three camps of reaction—Imperialism, Muslim League, and Hindu Mahasabha are affected in different ways. Imperialism is silent and has so far ignored this offer of ending the deadlock. Yet one wonders to what ruse will they resort to bolster up their *bona fides* at least before America, which claims to be the champion of liberty—or perhaps their attitude is as false as their allies? Mr. Jinnah has refused his blessings to the offer of Pakistan after the war dependent on a plebiscite. Rajagopalachariar has played a leading rôle in trying to cement the difficulties. So far (at the time of writing) there is no response from the Muslim League. Are they then not so sure of their influence over the masses as to jib at an honest plebiscite? It is time for them to speak out one way or the other. The Hindu Mahasabha is inflamed and has sought to question Gandhiji's action, bringing up the ancient slogan of betraying Bengal. They too seem to fear a plebiscite. It is enlightening to see how these two communal elements strengthen Imperialism's hand and help to keep it entrenched. They are afraid to try out this challenge to their leadership or even to call upon it for support. Two-thirds of India heartily supports Gandhiji's efforts at ending the deadlock, and the other third is made up of Britain's creations—the Princes, the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha and the hirelings that sit in Government offices.

It will be deplorable if Bengal with all her traditions of sacrifice and nationalism plays this rôle of disruption in Congress politics and delivers herself into the hands of communalists and Bose-ites. It is tragic that Congressmen should have become subservient to communal politics in Bengal for want of adequate leadership. There is no leader of the magnitude of Patel or Nehru here; they are all second grade. So far the Punjab, the other affected province by the concession of Pakistan, has started no hue-

and cry, so it seems as if there is some measure of unity between the two communities there and the Unionist Party has really achieved something. They seem to be really interested in National Government.

Press opinions from Britain and America are generally favourable, though Conservative papers are not hesitating to pipe the tune Amery and Churchill are going to call, but on the whole more realism and sympathy might have been forthcoming. However the coming India Debate in the Commons should prove interesting, if not fruitful.

On the publication of Gandhi's suggestions, while favourable comments were received from the more progressive papers in Britain and America, such a diehard opinion as this was expressed by *The Times* :—

“The formula does not remove the ‘incompatibility of terms’ on which the Hindus and the Muslims are ready to co-operate in the formation of a ‘provisional’ National Government and ‘leaves unsolved many of the more important League doubts and fears’.”

Sir Alfred Watson, once editor of *The Statesman* and a missed target of terrorists, still seeks to preserve the India of “blimps” and “burra sahibs” and wrote of Gandhiji :—

“The country is sick to death of the *impasse* into which Mr. Gandhi let it. There are signs, which are evident enough in the movements of various parties, of desire to get away from the deadlock but the very old and ill man sits tight . . . Mr. Gandhi must not be allowed to block the way. Mr. Gandhi himself must be aware of the decline of his influence. He has shown himself eager for interviews at his present retreat but newspaper correspondents no longer flock to his feet. American correspondents particularly are fighting shy of a man whose jumbled creed they have more difficulty in

understanding. Mr. Gandhi is a very vain man. This indifference must be galling to him for he always had a partiality for American newspapermen. He has found them an easy game in their search for piquant copy but for them a politician who remains static in his opinion amid changing circumstances has lost much of his value."

The absurd nature of these comments are not worthy of a reply.

Official Britain will fight tooth and nail to prevent a settlement since the Cabinet contains such noted Imperialist diehards as Winston Churchill, Sir John Anderson, Capt. Oliver Lyttleton, not to speak of Mr. Leopold Amery, as Secretary of State for India.

Once again Gandhi has proved himself a better statesman and politician than the diplomats of Britain, and by his friendly gesture of conciliation he has upset the applecart of politics. The "pincer" grip has been tightened on Imperialism as well as on the Muslim League—if they reject his offer they must disclaim their previous assertions and be discredited before the world (if there be any free-thinking world at all left), and if they agree the victory is still with Gandhiji. He has not retracted his "Quit India" policy, but emphasised it further by his present declarations.

## *C H A P T E R XII*

### THE GANDHIAN WAY

GANDHI, like all great men, has evolved no special philosophy or cult. This may come later out of the limitations of those who love and revere him, but at the moment he has adapted himself to certain ways of living and along

certain cardinal principles, and if this be called a philosophy it would be stretching the point too far. Gandhi's life has been active, therefore rather through deeds he has developed his mind than through sheer asceticism. If then those that believe in him and his ideals prefer to mould their lives according to his way of thinking, it means that thereby they attain a greater significance. Gandhi expounds no philosophy save the age-old ones with which India is familiar, if he introduces them on the revolutionary plane that is the newness of the Gandhian way but there is nothing new about it except their practical application to our day to day existence. Simplification of fundamentals to make them applicable to present-day existence and need seems to be the keynote of what might later become to be known as "Gandhism." At the moment there is no "-ism", Gandhi himself is a "searcher after truth", thus if necessary able to revise his views and ideas though he has found that in the main principles of life his vision is strangely clear and consistent. In Gandhi we see the metaphysical reduced to the practical plane, mysticism coupled with active politics.

Religion to Gandhi is a living force, and for years in his youth he spent much time in studying comparative religion from the standpoint of one seeking for the correct mode of approach. His mind was singularly original, prepared to take imprints yet clear as to what he strove to find. This knowledge of the various faiths had the effect of creating within him a curiously open mind, free from bigotry or orthodoxy. He was prepared to concede much to any believer; he was only intolerant of those who denied God. To him religion was the crux of all matters, and success or failure could only be dependent upon how living and active was one's faith. One's personal conduct and public life should be guided by well defined principles. He does not reject asceticism but in working out one's life according to the needs of the moment in service to

one's fellow creatures he finds equal merit and fulfilment. His own life has been thus directed and devoted; without discussing his achievements, it is certainly true that he has modelled his own conduct upon consistent basic ideals inspired by his deep belief in religion.

In view of this, one has to weigh whether this makes him reactionary or not. Religion is faith, and this is only retrogressive when it follows a sectarian policy and fails to see anything other than laid down by orthodoxy and convention. To such people the barriers narrow down until they have to crawl and lose the spacious visions which free religion brings before one. The reaction which naturally follows this hide-bound path is narrow to the extreme, and can see no good beyond its limits. This process gradually asphyxiates all feeling of tolerance or progress—to them progress means annihilation. What do we see in Gandhi's life? Born in another age—many years before the present generation—there is an adaptability about him, and the gradual working into existing conditions. His attitude towards many social and political problems is revolutionary. His work for the Harijans alone puts him far and away as one of the most progressive minds of this age, since his movement to free them from the age-old bonds that had held them back was a dagger aimed at the heart of orthodoxy. Reclamation of untouchables ranks as one of the most progressive movements of the age, and if Gandhi could view this with clarity, it follows that he is not reactionary by nature. Reviewed politically it might be said that had Gandhi concentrated on utilising the momentum of mass movements for achieving independence, the Harijan question could have been righted later once freedom had been won; also that he wasted much time and energy in this side-issue of national life, instead of on the primary objective. Both these allegations might be true, but what is also very apparent is this that with the untouchables he did not make the same mis-

take as he made in not going to the Muslim masses. It is true that his Harijan uplift has a religious significance because Gandhi believes that a true *sanatanist* is not one who merely clings to orthodoxy and convention but one who believes in the eternal and unchanging spirit of Hinduism; and as such he claims to be a *sanatanist*, much more than those who revile him for having befriended the untouchables, since to him the cardinal principles of the religion are much wider and more important than the narrowness of orthodoxy, and he is convinced that the present caste system is an excretion of the religion while drawing them back within the fold is the correct procedure. This however is its religious aspect but it has its political repercussions—reclamation of Harijans is the application of the democratic principle of espousing the cause of the "haves-nots" and in India it has a more important significance in not allowing the 50 million untouchables to stray into reactionary camps and be exploited as an issue by their so-called champions. By pledging the Congress to the uplift of the untouchables Gandhi placed them on a plane of national importance, thereby foiling the purposes of those who would utilise them to create further complications in the national life, thus strengthening Britain's policy of "divide and rule."

It is necessary to realise the position occupied by religion and religious principles in Gandhi's life before reviewing the various factors which have helped him to promulgate the Gandhian Way. He is inspired by moral obligations and implications in his actions, which take most practical forms without being at all metaphysical in their application. But to Gandhi the "means" is religion; the "ends" may be necessary and practical. Because he essentially believes in Truth as part of religion, it is possible for him to frankly admit his own mistakes and faults, and this is the principal characteristic of his autobiography. The entire book is free from embellishments and flourishes,

it is a clean statement of his life which he shares with the reader. It is not great from a literary point of view but it most certainly is a moving document and entirely free from individual bias. He shares his doubts and faults frankly with the reader and does nothing to gloss over or excuse his defects. How many people, one wonders, are capable of such self-abnegation and censure? Truth is not quibbling, yet Gandhi is condemned very often for having the courage to admit publicly that he is mistaken and that at present he considers this the better way. When one does it from the point of view of diplomacy it is not condemned, why then should an actual change of heart be looked upon with suspicion? Because Gandhi is vowed to Truth, he can afford to admit his mistakes or changes and he surely merits the trust of those he takes into his confidence. For some of us much confusion is caused by what may appear contradictory statements, but if one reads them over and realises that Gandhi is voicing his own doubts and fears before reaching a conclusion and taking the public into his confidence, then gradually the cloud disappears and whether one is in sympathy with him or not it is possible to see at what he is aiming.

Truth being with religion the fundamental in his life we come to the allied principle of *ahimsa* or non-violence which he has found as the most powerful of all soul-forces. Its application to national life in the form of *satyagraha* or passive resistance has been yet another revolutionary contribution on the part of Gandhi. There is no thinking person, save war lords and dictators, who will not agree that peace is what the world has been striving after since its inception. But so far nobody has been able to bequeath it to this storm-tossed earth. After the last world war of 1914-1918 pacifism took on fresh shape everywhere, and people generally felt that therein lay the only method of finding true peace. To this cause Gandhi made valuable contributions, since he was able to chalk out a way

of living for those sworn to pacifism—if these are not contradictory terms, he made it possible for activity in the passive resister or pacifist. By his *satyagraha* movement he created a moral militancy even of greater value and strength than militarism, since it presupposes infinite heroism in being prepared to sacrifice even unto death. It had a dynamic quality which not only refuted it as a coward's refuge but showed up the participants as real stalwarts in battle. Gandhiji has said that "Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from indomitable will . . . Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute . . . Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant." This capacity of being able to resist and conquer suffering through sacrifice seems an extraordinarily vital and living thing. It means greater discipline than even a soldier in battle has to subject himself to, since it means the disciplining of body and soul and the recognition of the possibility of personal annihilation for the greater good of the cause. Retaliation means a certain amount of brute satisfaction, but passive resistance means dogged will-power and the ability to bear all inflictions with serenity. It is the stuff of which martyrs are made. This Gandhi has successfully applied in redressing the country's wrongs. In place of anarchy he has substituted organised passive resistance, peacefully and without any recourse to violence. Leading pacifists in other parts of the world have watched with great wonder Gandhi's experiments in passive resistance and its application to a nation fighting for freedom. John S. Hayland says that "Satyagraha as advocated and practised by Gandhi and his followers is *the* central teaching of Christianity—the Cross as an eternal principle for the conquering of wrong (by love) and the transforming of the evil will into a good

will by suffering self-chosen and patiently endured." Stephen Hobhouse writing on Gandhi's seventieth birthday on his significance for the Christian pacifist said: "Gandhi is the great soul, the *Mahatma* of our day, the youthful prophet of a redeemed humanity, a regenerated society, of a world yet to be born, a world already, if we also will do our part, in its birth-throes; and we who stand beneath the shadow of Jesus Christ reverently salute him and all true *satyagrahis* as members of the same company, as fellow citizens of the eternal city of God, the city of our dreams to be." Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence and pacifism presupposes a moral training and integrity and the people of the world have to be educated up to it before one can hope to apply it convincingly and conclusively on a universal scale.

Gandhi by adopting the spinning wheel as the symbol for India has identified her poor with the national cause. In fact by insisting that all true followers of the movement should devote an allotted time to spinning he wishes them also to identify each individual gradually with the masses of India. For Gandhi the promulgation of *swadeshi* meant not only an economic force but for him it held the ethics of true religion. *Swadeshi* is for Gandhi not a question of where the capital comes from but how it benefits the indigenous masses or obversely how it impoverishes them. Taking instances—the All-India Spinners' Association serves the peasantry primarily but in general the poor of India by helping them to extra earning by the propagation and organisation of cottage industries. In this case therefore, suppose the capital had been supplied from the West, the A.-I.S.A. would still be *swadeshi* in this that the benefits accrued went to the Indian people. Conversely taking Bata's—as one of the "India Ltd." companies who have Indian capital and Indian labour, but they are not *swadeshi* because they are in direct competition with the people—that is they have put *mochis* (shoemakers) out

of business, without providing any suitable alternative occupation or organising these very people to serve the shoemaking trade. The interests of the people in general is the message of *swadeshi* as understood by Gandhi, where this clashes with foreign interests or is made subservient to the latter there the demarcation of *swadeshi* and *videshi* (foreign) must be drawn.

*Khadi* or hand-spun hand-woven cloth is for Gandhi a measure of economic relief for the poverty-stricken masses of India; with it he couples the other necessary cottage industries such as oil-pressing, papermaking etc. Apart from an idealistic standpoint it is a singularly practical measure. Taking advantage of the experiences of the Bengali *swadeshi* movement of 1905, when foreign boycott was made possible through mill-woven cloth and thus mill owners to profiteer and cause inflation at the cost of their poorer brethren, leading finally to the breakdown of the boycott, Gandhi was anxious to find a way whereby this should not be repeated. Out of this was evolved the *khaddar*, which has attained a position of national prestige to-day and become almost a symbol of India's fight against British imperialist and colonial policy. From the start Gandhi said that *khaddar* or spinning does not enter into competition with any industry, it merely provides a substitute occupation for India's peasantry during the six months in which they are forced to remain unemployed. Therefore its remuneration cannot be compared with the wages earned through regular alternative employment, since spinning is meant to be a supplementary industry. "The sole claim on its behalf," says Gandhi, "is that it alone offers an immediate, practicable, and permanent solution of problems which confront India—namely, the enforced idleness for nearly six months in the year of an overwhelming majority of India's population, owing to lack of a suitable occupation supplementary to agriculture, and the chronic starvation of the masses that result thereby."

*There would be no place for the spinning wheel in the national life of India, comparatively small as the remuneration that can be derived from it is, if these two factors were not there.*" (Italics mine) Gandhi in instituting *khadi* as the nation-wide constructive programme was inspired by the stupendous problem of unemployment and the beggarly condition of village economy. With the coming of British capital most rural industries had been forced out of existence, thus the pressure on land and fragmentation of agricultural holdings was the natural effect with the result that the majority of India's population has been reduced to beggary, and if there is going to be any chance of rehabilitating them it will have to be done by filling in those six months when in between crops they remain unemployed, as well as by introducing some lucrative cottage industry in their homes. The spinning wheel filled these gaps, without in any way entering into competition with the mills, factories or any other form of employment. By adopting the *charkha* these people might be able to make at least enough yarn to clothe themselves at a nominal cost, or sell it to those able to purchase and thus earn a supplementary even though small income. Village economy in pre-British days subsidised handcraftsmen of all kinds, and kept the agriculturist in substantial holdings, preventing overcrowding. The contrast to-day is most apparent without going into details, it is sufficient that handicrafts are being slowly killed off and village economy is being reduced to a point approaching destitution. The standard of living is naturally sinking all over the country. Therefore when Gandhi began to work out how to stabilise village economy in spite of the appalling rural conditions, the *charkha* struck him as admirably suited as a subsidiary industry and adaptable as a remedy that would give quick returns. He also felt that next to food yarn for clothing must always command a good market and that spinning was not restricted by local

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weather conditions while solving the problem of partial unemployment. No special intelligence is required for it, while raw materials are easily available and it would bring work to the doorstep of the peasantry. His analysis in brief was that like Ramakrishna it was not enough to bring the word of God to those that suffered without doing anything to alleviate their sufferings, and he felt that economics must be based on life. Thus through *khadi* a practical philosophy was evolved whereby in August 1939 the number of people employed in the A.-I.S.A. programme of work was over three lakhs, embracing 13,000 villages and requiring 2,571 organisers. In this way the movement gathered momentum and popularity since the time when in the twenties Gandhi introduced spinning to the inmates of Sabarmati *Ashram*. To some extent it is an index of his power and popularity with the Indian masses. Effectively Gandhi proved the uses of the *charkha* as a measure of famine relief in securing immediate employment for those in need, and more than ever it has been found invaluable in the task of rehabilitating the destitutes of Bengal after the 1943 famine. In discussing cottage industries and spinning it must be remembered that Gandhi is not against machinery, except where it ousts and impoverishes the handicraftsman. He has always maintained that there is place and need for heavy industry in India, but as long as famine and unemployment exist it is necessary to safeguard cottage industries to supplement the agriculturist's earnings. The "Buy *Swadeshi*" movement instituted by Gandhi has given the necessary encouragement to mills while *khadi* has safeguarded exploitation and profiteering by the mills, since no longer was the emphasis on mill-made cloth but had shifted to hand spinning.

It has always been said that Gandhi is much influenced by the millowning bosses, but he said frankly to Louis Fischer that he would not hesitate to sacrifice them to the

interests of the masses; their help and friendship to-day would not stand in the face of ruthless behaviour when the time came. To the Princes he has given a gentle warning that while he is tolerant towards them, it were better for them to make their peace with their subjects and nationalist India in his lifetime, for people like Nairu would give them short shrift once he is gone.

To Gandhi personal conduct and way of living has been of great importance, and he has gone to great lengths to adjust his life so that he might subdue the flesh and make it subservient to the mind. This of course meant the development of a high moral tone, and for him this happened side by side with his subjection of carnal desires. To him who has developed his moral ethics from religion the desire to lead his life in the ways of the Lord was paramount. To achieve this it meant reducing his habits to utter simplicity—this embraced not only his body but his mind. To attune himself to this plane he lived his days in frugality, resorting to fasts to cleanse his mind and spirit of excretions. Having reduced food and clothing to the bare minimum and introduced asceticism in his way of living it became possible for him to gradually subdue the flesh completely. It took him years of struggle in which his love for Kasturba turned from the mere physical relationship to a spiritual comradeship. This transition was responsible for much heartbreak and sorrow caused by the sheer love of Gandhi for his wife but ultimately he came to the conclusion that the mental companionship far transcends the physical and that it is degrading to a woman that she should be looked upon merely as an object of lust. It took him the best part of 20 years to achieve this victory of the mind over the senses. It was in Africa that he first took the vow of *brahmacharya* whereby he ended his physical relationship with his wife, and attained a spiritual satisfaction therefrom. He has vehemently opposed promiscuity in sex life even between husband and wife and

advocated continency as the only way. As such he is greatly opposed to artificial birth control, maintaining that man by his soul-force can control his brutish senses and should utilise this. Having by his own soul-force gone from strength to strength it is difficult for him to realise that other men are not all as he is, and that scientific methods to curb India's growing population would prove economically beneficial. Gandhi fully believes that a nation should be brought up to realise its moral strength and *brahmacharya* should help it to do this as in ancient times young men took vows of *brahmacharya* merely as a self-disciplinary and temporary measure as part of their education.

In politics Gandhi is a supreme realist and a shrewd reader of events. There is no mysticism about his handling of political affairs, though he himself claims his inspiration from God and prayer. Whenever in a moment of crisis he has had the handling of affairs he has done so practically and realistically. He is an intuitive psychologist, and is able clearly to judge reactions, whether of individuals or of the mass mind. Quite often he appears to go counter to the mass demand but invariably he is fully aware how far the masses will be able to go and adjusts his deeds and ideas accordingly. Then again the mind of an adversary is also open before him, and he can guess pretty shrewdly his reactions, so there too he tries to get the maximum out of his adversary by adjusting his views and the trend of events to suit the pace. His handling of the present situation, and his declarations are a master stroke of realism and statesmanlike ability. He retracts nothing, he merely goes forward and considers the ideas and steps of the past as dead. There is no time to look back, so he presses onward in such a way as to leave his adversaries few loopholes. Behind his gentle utterances there is the flash of steel and an unequalled sternness. When he wishes, Gandhi is crisp and to the point; there

is little of the *dilettante* in him, and his grasp of whatever situation exists is immediate and masterly. He moulds it towards the way in which he desires to proceed. Perhaps there is dictatorship, but no dictator takes his defeats in the spirit that Gandhi has always accepted his, without bitterness, rancour or revenge, proving once more that he is a supreme realist who does not flinch before facts nor is he afraid of revising his views. His greatness has no room for false pride.

In his personal relationships he is guided by a fearless adherence to truth, a gentle understanding coupled with a loyalty that does not hesitate to differ. He has the power to inspire a devotion and friendship that lasts even in the midst of contradictions and differences. He gathers round him, drawn by the magnet of his smile, all classes, all sections and all races of people and he is entirely free from differentiations. There is within him a singularly large reservoir of goodwill towards mankind which frees him from the curse of bitterness. He can strive against his adversaries without losing one tithe of his feeling of amity towards them. In fact his friendliness never wavers even when they smite him with false accusations—he bears it all in the non-violent spirit of a satyagrahi. Gandhi has in his lifetime given tremendous loyalties and enjoyed the confidence, love, devotion and friendship of great men such as Gokhale, Motilal Nehru, Swami Shraddhananda, Hakim Ajmal Khan, C. R. Das and others. These contacts were never severed even where differences existed, and he exhibited supreme patience and tolerance towards all with whom he came into contact. His political ideals have at all times differed from violent ideologies, and when these have swept stormily over the Indian scene, he has stood aside and allowed the affair to take its course unable to prevent it, but as soon as his advice and leadership has been called for he has unhesitatingly given of his utmost.

During his seventy-five years Gandhi has lived fully but the most outstanding of all his achievements has been to lift his people from their submissive, superstitious, uneducated ways to the light of freedom. He has helped them to strengthen their backs, look straight ahead and demand the right to live; he has taught them to appreciate their historic background not to live in the past but to march forward towards the future. He has created a tomorrow full of hopes and promises. To him goes the honour of restoring their self-respect to Indians. Furthermore his creed of passive resistance embraces protest, persuasion, compromise and even disobedience but not bloodshed, carnage and outrage. This doctrine presupposes self-sacrifice, nobility and moral courage and he has been able—perhaps not wholly but periodically—to mould India along these lines towards freedom. Through him has been created a feeling for the hitherto neglected untouchables, and to-day more people are conscious of their needs than there were before Gandhi woke their consciences within them. There has never been anything but absolute sincerity in his dealings, and those of us who have differed from him from time to time, must recognise this more readily and fully than those who have followed him through every phase. To-day when he has completed his twenty-fifth year, he still spans the horizon of Indian affairs as he did in 1920. To the world Gandhi is India; he has become synonymous with the India that is striving for articulateness and fighting for the right to live. Others have risen, may rise, but they are dwarfed before the immense personality of Bapu—the Little Father of India.